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Hankin, St. John
The Cassilis engagement.

agement.

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1907
No. 116

THE CASSILIS ENGAGEMENT

A Comedy in Four Acts

BY

ST. JOHN HANKIN

AUTHOR OF "THE TWO MR. WETHERBYS," "THE RETURN OF THE
PRODIGAL," "THE CHARITY THAT BEGAN AT HOME."

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2 Fado		82 Vicar of Wakefield		142 Hofer		242 Mary's Birthday	
3 The Lady of Lyons		83 Leap Year		143 Self		243 Shandy Maguire	
4 Richelieu		84 The Catapaw		144 Cinderella		244 Wild Oats	
5 The Wife		85 The Passing Cloud		145 Phantom		245 Michael Erle	
6 The Moonroom		86 Drunkard		146 Franklin [Moscow		246 Idiot Witness	
7 The School for Scandal		87 Rob Roy		147 The Gunmaker of		247 Willow Copse	
8 Money		88 George Barnwell		148 The Love of a Prince		248 People's Lawyer	
VOL. II.		VOL. XII.		VOL. XXII.		VOL. XXXII.	
9 The Stranger		89 Ingomar		149 Son of the Night		249 The Boy Martyrs	
10 Grandfather Whitehead		90 Sketches in India		150 Rory O'More		250 Lucretia Borgia	
11 Richard III		91 Two Friends		151 Golden Eagle		251 Surgeon of Paris	
12 Love's Sacrifice		92 Jane Shore		152 Rensz		252 Patrician's Daughter	
13 The Gamester		93 Corsican Brothers		153 Broken Sword		253 Shoemaker of Toulouse	
14 A Cure for the Heartache		94 Mind your own Business		154 Kip Van Winkle		254 Momentous Question	
15 The Hunchback		95 Writing on the Wall		155 Isabelle		255 Love and Loyalty	
16 Don Cesar de Bazan		96 Heir at Law		156 Heart of Mid Lanthan		256 Robber's Wife	
VOL. III.		VOL. XIII.		VOL. XXIII.		VOL. XXXIII.	
17 The Poor Gentleman		97 Soldier's Daughter		157 Actress of Padua		257 Dumb Girl of Genoa	
18 Hamlet		98 Douglas		158 Floating Beacon		258 Wick Ashore	
19 Charles II		99 Marco Spada		159 Bride of Lammermoor		259 Clari	
20 Venice Preserved		100 Nature's Nobleman		160 Cataract of the Ganges		260 Rural Felicity	
21 Pizarro		101 Sardanapalus		161 Robber of the Rhine		261 Wallace	
22 The Love Chase		102 Civilisation		162 School of Reform		262 Madeline	
23 Othello		103 The Robbers		163 Wandering Boys		263 The Fireman	
24 Lead me Five Shillings		104 Katharina and Petruchio		164 Mazarin		264 Grist to the Mill	
VOL. IV.		VOL. XIV.		VOL. XXIV.		VOL. XXXIV.	
25 Virginia		105 Game of Love		165 Young New York		265 Two Loves and a Life	
26 King of the Commons		106 Midsummer Night's		166 The Victim		266 Annie Blake	
27 London Assurance		107 Ernestine [Dream		167 Romance after Marriage		267 Steward	
28 The Rent Day		108 Rag Picker of Paris		168 Bigand		268 Captain Kyd	
29 Two Gentlemen of Verona		109 Flying Dutchman		169 Poor of New York		269 Nick of the Woods	
30 The Jealous Wife		110 Hypocrite		170 Ambrose Gwinnett		270 Marble Heart	
31 The Rivals		111 Therese		171 Raymond and Agnes		271 Second Love	
32 Perfection		112 La Tour de Neale		172 Gambler's Fate		272 Dream at Sea	
VOL. V. [Debits		VOL. XV.		VOL. XXV.		VOL. XXXV.	
33 A New Way to Pay Old		113 Ireland As It Is		173 Father and Son		273 Breach of Promise	
34 Look Before You Leap		114 Sea of Ice		174 Massaniello		274 Review	
35 King John		115 Seven Clerks		175 Sixteen String Jack		275 Lady of the Lake	
36 My Own Man		116 Game of Life		176 Youthful Queen		276 Still Water Runs Deep	
37 Aaron and Pythias		117 Forty Thieves		177 Skeleton Witness		277 The Scholar	
38 clandestine Marriage		118 Bryan Borobino		178 Innkeeper of Abbeville		278 Helping Hands	
39 William Tell		119 Romance and Reality		179 Miller and his Men		279 Faust and Marguerite	
40 Day after the Wedding		120 Ugolino		200 Aladdin		280 Last Man	
VOL. VI.		VOL. XVI.		VOL. XXVI.		VOL. XXXA	
41 Speed the Plough		121 The Tempest		201 Adrienne the Actress		281 Belle's Stratagem	
42 Romeo and Juliet		122 The Pilot		202 Undine		282 Old and Young	
43 Fendal Times		123 Carpenter of Rouen		203 Jesse Brown		283 Raffella	
44 Charles the Twelfth		124 King's Rival		204 Aemodens		284 Ruth Oakley	
45 The Bride		125 Little Treasure		205 Mormons		285 British Sir va	
46 The Follies of a Night		126 Dombey and Son		206 Blanche of Brandywine		286 A Life's Ransom	
47 Iron Chest [Fair Lady		127 Parents and Guardians		207 Viola		287 Girelda	
48 Faint Heart Never Won		128 Jewess		208 Dearest Deserter		288 Time Tries All	
VOL. VII.		VOL. XVII.		VOL. XXVII.		VOL. XXXVII.	
49 Road to Ruin		129 Camille		209 Americans in Paris		289 Ella Rosenberg	
50 Macbeth		130 Married Life		210 Victorine		290 Warlock of the Glen	
51 Temper		131 Wenlock of Wenlock		211 Wizard of the Wave		291 Zelina	
52 Evadne		132 Rose of Etrickvale		212 Castle Spectre		292 Beatrice	
53 Bertram		133 David Copperfield		213 Horse-shoe Robinson		293 Neighbor Jackwood	
54 The Duenna		134 Alina, or the Rose of		214 Armasod, Mrs. Mowatt		294 Wonder	
55 Much Ado About Nothing		135 Pauline [Killarney		215 Fashion, Mrs. Mowatt		295 Robert Emmet	
56 Critic		136 Jane Eyre		216 Glance at New York		296 Green Bushes	
VOL. VIII.		VOL. XVIII.		VOL. XXVIII.		VOL. XXXVIII.	
57 Ostate		137 Night and Morning		217 Inconstant		297 Flowers of the Forest	
58 Night		138 Ethiope		218 Uncle Tom's Cabin		298 A Bachelor of Arts	
59 Co		139 Three Guards		219 Guide to the Stage		299 The Midnight Banquet	
60 Romance		140 Tom Cringle		220 Veteran		300 Husband of an Hour	
61 Young Hearts		141 Henriette, the Broken		221 Miller of New Jersey		301 Love's Labor Lost	
62 [riage		142 Eustache Baud.		222 Dark Hour before Dawn		302 Naiad Queen	
63 For Mar-		143 Ernest Maltravers		223 Midsum'r Night's Dream		303 Caprice	
VOL. IX.		VOL. XIX.		VOL. XXIX.		VOL. XXXIX.	
64 Dred, or the Dismal		144 Bold Dragons		224 Art and Artifice		304 Cradle of Liberty	
65 [Swamp		145 Last Days of Pompeii		225 Poor Young Man		305 The Lost Ship	
66 Esmeralda		146 Peter Wilkins		226 Asawattomnie Brown		306 Country Squire	
67 Ben the Bokstwald		147 Ben the Bokstwald		227 Oliver Twist		307 Fraud and its Victims	
68 Jonathan Bradford		148 Ben the Bokstwald		228 Oliver Twist		308 Putnam	
69 Retribution		149 Ben the Bokstwald		229 Panvrette		309 King and Deserter	
70 Mineral		150 Jonathan Bradford		230 Man in the Iron Mask		310 La Flammina	
VOL. XX.		VOL. XX.		VOL. XXX.		VOL. XL.	
71 French Spy		151 Retribution		231 Knight of Arva		311 A Hard Struggle	
72 Wept of Wish-Ion Wish		152 Mineral		232 Moll Pitcher		312 Gwinnette Vaughan	
73 Evil Genius		153 French Spy		233 Black Eyed Susan		313 The Love Knot [Judge	
74 Ben Bolt		154 Wept of Wish-Ion Wish		234 Satan in Paris		314 Lavater, or Not a Bad	
75 Sallor of France		155 Evil Genius		235 Rosina Meadows		315 The Noble Heart	
76 Red Mask		156 Ben Bolt		236 West End, or Irish Heir		316 Coriolanus	
77 Life of an Actress		157 Sallor of France		237 Six Degrees of Crime		317 The Winter's Tale	
78 Wedding Day		158 Red Mask		238 The Lady and the Devil		318 Eveleen Wilson	
79 Anger		159 Life of an Actress		239 Avenger, or Moor of Sicily		319 Ivanhoe	
80 Wedding Day		160 Wedding Day		240 Masks and Faces [ly		320 Jonathan in England	

(French's Standard Drama Continued on 3d page of Cover.)

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THE CASSILIS ENGAGEMENT.

*Cast of the Original production before the Stage Society
at the Imperial Theatre, London on Feb. 10, 1907.*

PRODUCER,—Miss Madge McIntosh.

Persons of the Comedy.

MRS. CASSILIS.....	Miss Evelyn Weeden.
THE COUNTESS OF REMENHAM.	Miss Florence Haydon.
LADY MARCHMONT, Mrs. Cassilis's sister.....	Miss Gertrude Burnett.
MRS. HERRIES.....	Miss K. M. Romsey.
MRS. BORRIDGE.....	Miss Clare Greet.
LADY MABEL VENNING, Lady Remenham's daughter.....	Miss Isabel Roland.
ETHEL BORRIDGE.....	Miss Maudi Darrell.
THE RECTOR.. ..	Mr. F. Morland.
MAJOR WARRINGTON.....	Mr. Sam Sothern.
GEOFFREY CASSILIS.....	Mr. Langhorne Burton.
WATSON, Butler at Deynham.	Mr. Ralf Hutton.
DORSET, Mrs. Cassilis's maid..	Miss Margaret Mackenzie.
TWO FOOTMEN.	

The Scene takes place at Deynham Abbey in Leicestershire.

ACT I. The Drawing-room.

ACT II. The Lawn.

ACT III. The Smoking-room off the Billiard-room.

ACT IV. The Morning-room.

One night elapses between Acts I., and II.

One week between Acts II., and III.

One night between Acts III., and IV.

NOTE.—The Leicestershire Cassilises pronounce their name as it is spelt.

Properties.

ACT. I.

Tea-cloth.
Tea-things for six.
Bread and butter.
Cake.
Cake-stand.

ACT II.

Rose to be picked.
Red cushion (for Mrs. Borridge).

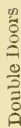
ACT III.

Whiskey.
Siphon.
Half-dozen tumblers.
Cigar-box.
Matches.
Paper-knife (breakable).
Pen, ink, blotter, note-paper, envelopes and thin tinted paper.
Pack of cards.
Volume of Schubert's songs.
Other books of music.
Illustrated paper.

ACT IV.

Cigarette case and match-box (Geoffrey).
Book (brought by Lady R.).
Cushion for Mrs. Borridge.
Morning paper.

Double Doors



THE CASSILIS ENGAGEMENT.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The white drawing room at Deynham Abbey. A very handsome room furnished Louis Seize. A tea table is spread up stage. When curtain rises the RECTOR and MRS. HERRIES are discovered. The former stands on hearth rug with back to fireless hearth. The latter sits comfortably in armchair. They are evidently people in easy circumstances and of good social standing. There are big double doors c. Three Louis Seize armchairs; easily moved, by fireplace. Two or three small chairs up L. c. not far from tea table. Large window L., rocker down stage. Sofa in front of it, set rocker diagonally with its back to the stage. Small settee or chair by end of it nearest footlights. Handsome Louis Seize tables, chests of drawers or cabinets on either side of door c.*

MRS. HERRIES. (*at window, then crosses R. c.*)
I wonder what can be keeping Mrs. Cassilis.

NOTE. The Stage Directions throughout this play are given from the standpoint of the audience, R. meaning the Audience's Right, L. the Audience's Left.

RECTOR. (*back to fire*) My dear I told you we oughtn't to have called. On so sad an occasion. . . .

MRS. HERRIES. (R. C.) My dear Hildebrand, it's just on these sad occasions that a visit is so consoling. One should always call after a birth, a funeral. . . . (*sits*)

BUTLER. (*showing in* LADY REMENHAM *and her daughter*) I will tell Mrs. Cassilis you are here, my lady. She will be down in a moment.

LADY REMENHAM. (*coming down R. C. to armchair*) Thank you. How do you do Mrs. Herries. How do you do, Rector. (*general handshake*)

(MABEL and RECTOR cross L.)

MRS. HERRIES. How do you Lady Remenham.

(RECTOR crosses L. to window.)

RECTOR. How do you do, Mabel. (LADY MABEL *at window*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*seating herself comfortably* R. C.) You've heard this dreadful news haven't you? (RECTOR *makes sympathetic gesture*)

MRS. HERRIES. Yes. Poor Mrs. Cassilis.

LADY REMENHAM. Poor Adelaide indeed. That unhappy boy! But there! How any mother can allow such a thing to happen passes my comprehension. To get engaged!

RECTOR. (*nods sympathetically*) Just so. (C.)

LADY REMENHAM. (*sitting in armchair*) Engagements are such troublesome things. They sometimes even lead to marriage. But we'll hope it won't be as bad as that in this case. You've not heard who she is I suppose?

MRS. HERRIES. (*sitting R. C.*) No.

LADY REMENHAM. Ah. Someone quite impossible of course. Otherwise Adelaide would have told us in her letter.

MRS. HERRIES. I'm afraid so.

LADY REMENHAM. It's really extremely wicked of Geoffrey. And so silly too!—which is worse. A temporary infatuation I could understand, terminated by some small monetary payment. It would have been regrettable of course, but young men are like that. And Adelaide could have stopped it out of his allowance. But an engagement! I am quite shocked at her.

MABEL. (*at window*) Don't you think, mamma, we might leave Mrs. Cassilis to manage her son's affairs her own way? (*sits on sofa L.*)

LADY REMENHAM. She has *not* managed them. That's exactly what I complain of. I can't altogether acquit the Rector of some blame in the matter. He was Geoffrey's tutor for years. They used to say in *my* young days "Train up a child in the way he should go——"

RECTOR. (*at back of settee*) And when he's grown up he'll give you a great deal of anxiety. So they did! So they did! (*sits in small chair L. C.*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*severely*) That is not the ending *I* remember.

RECTOR. That is the Revised Version.

LADY REMENHAM. I daresay. They seem to alter everything nowadays. But if so I hardly see the use of education.

RECTOR. I have long been of that opinion,

Lady Remenham. (*Enter c. Mrs. Cassilis in a charming afternoon gown*)

Mrs. Cassilis. You *must* forgive me all of you. I had some letters to finish. (*general handshake. Kiss to MABEL*) Dear Mabel. How do you do, Mrs. Herries.

RECTOR. How do you do, Mrs. Cassilis.

LADY REMENHAM. My dear Adelaide *what* a charming gown! But you always do have the most delightful clothes. Where *do* you get them?

Mrs. Cassilis. Clarice made this. (*two footmen and BUTLER bring tea. They bring table down c. BUTLER looks on*)

LADY REMENHAM. Clarice? The wretch! She always makes my things atrociously. If only I had your figure!

(*Footman brings chair from up L. puts it L. of table.*)

Mrs. Cassilis. Excuse me dear. (*to BUTLER*) The carriage has gone to the station to meet Lady Marchmont, Watson?

BUTLER. Yes, Madam. It started five minutes ago. (*exit BUTLER followed by FOOTMEN*)

Mrs. Cassilis. (*to LADY REMENHAM*) I'm so glad you like it. (*up to table*)

LADY REMENHAM. Is Margaret coming to stay with you? (*crosses to table L. c.*)

Mrs. Cassilis. Yes, for ten days.

LADY REMENHAM. And now will you please pour out my tea? I have come here to scold you and I shall require several cups.

Mrs. Cassilis. (*quite innocent*) To scold *me*?

(*goes to table and takes seat*) Won't you all bring up your chairs to the table? (*they all do so*) Rector where are you? (*to LADY REMENHAM*) Cream?

LADY REMENHAM. Thank you. And a small lump.

MRS. CASSILIS. And why am I to be scolded?

LADY REMENHAM. You know quite well. Adelaide what is this I hear about Geoffrey's engagement?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*cheerfully*) Oh that? Yes. Geoffrey has got engaged to a girl in London. Isn't it *romantic* of him! I know nothing whatever about her except that I believe she has no money and Geoffrey is over head and ears in love with her.

MRS. HERRIES. My dear Mrs. Cassilis, I should have thought *that* was quite enough!

MRS. CASSILIS. Rector, will you cut that cake? It's just by your hand.

LADY REMENHAM. Where did he meet her?

MRS. CASSILIS. In an omnibus, I understand.

LADY REMENHAM. An omnibus!

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. That was so *romantic* too! One of the horses fell down and she was frightened. They thought she was going to faint. Geoffrey got her out, took charge of her, discovered her address and took her home. Wasn't it *clever* of him? Of course she asked him to come in. He was introduced to her mother. And now they're engaged. (*gives cup to Rector*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*with awful dignity*) And what is the name of this young person?

MRS. CASSILIS. Borridge.

LADY REMENHAM. Borridge! Mabel my love pray remember if ever you come home and inform me that you are engaged to a person of the name of Borridge I shall whip you. (*puts down cup*)

MABEL. Very well, Mamma.

MRS. CASSILIS. Another cup?

LADY REMENHAM. Thank you. Rather less sugar, this time. (*gives cup*) I never could understand why you let Geoffrey be in London at all. Alone too. Young men ought never to be allowed out alone at his age. They are so susceptible. (*takes cup*)

MABEL. Geoffrey has his profession, mamma.

MRS. CASSILIS. Geoffrey's at the Bar, you know.

LADY REMENHAM. The Bar! What business has Geoffrey to be at the Bar! Deynham has the best shooting in the Shires and in the winter there's the hunting. What more does he want? It's disgraceful.

RECTOR. My dear Lady Remenham you're sure you're not confusing the *Bar* with the *Dock*?

MRS. HERRIES. Hildebrand!

LADY REMENHAM. The Bar is a good enough profession of course. But only for *very* younger sons. Geoffrey will have Deynham some day and twelve thousand a year. I don't think Adelaide need have made a little attorney of him.

MRS. CASSILIS. Young men must do *something*, don't you think?

LADY REMENHAM. Certainly not! It's this vulgar Radical notion that people ought to *do*

things that is ruining English Society. What did Mr. Borridge *do*, by the way?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*hesitates*) He was a book-maker, I believe.

LADY REMENHAM. (*triumphantly*) There you see! That's what comes of *doing* things!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*slight shrug. Pouring herself out more tea and still quite unruffled*) Well I'm afraid there's no use in discussing it. They're engaged and Miss Borridge is coming down here.

MRS. HERRIES. Coming here!

LADY REMENHAM. Coming here!!!

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. On a visit. With her mother.

LADY REMENHAM. (*putting down her cup with a touch of solemnity*) Adelaide are you—excuse my asking the question—are you *quite* in your right mind?

MRS. CASSILIS. I believe so.

LADY REMENHAM. You've noticed nothing? No dizziness about the head? No singing in the ears? (MRS. CASSILIS *shakes her head*) And yet you ask this young woman to stay with you! And her mother! Neither of whom you know anything whatever about!

MRS. CASSILIS. Another cup? (MRS. CASSILIS *takes it*)

LADY REMENHAM. Is Mr. Borridge—Ugh—coming too?

MRS. CASSILIS. He is dead, I believe.

LADY REMENHAM. That at least is satisfactory.

MABEL. Mamma!

LADY REMENHAM. Mabel I shall do my duty

whatever happens. And does Mrs. Borridge carry on the business? I think you said he was a *boot-maker*?

MABEL. *Book-maker.*

MRS. CASSILIS. No. I believe he left her some small annuity.

LADY REMENHAM. Annuity? Ah, dies with her of course?

MRS. CASSILIS. No doubt.

LADY REMENHAM. Well Adelaide I never should have believed it of you. To ask these people to the house!

MRS. CASSILIS. Why shouldn't I ask them? Geoffrey tells me Ethel is charming.

LADY REMENHAM. Ethel?

MRS. CASSILIS. Miss Borridge.

LADY REMENHAM. Bah! (*enter BUTLER c. showing in LADY MARCHMONT*)

BUTLER. Lady Marchmont.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*rising*) Ah Margaret. How glad I am to see you. Some more tea, Watson.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*kisses her*) Not for me, please. No really. My doctor won't *hear* of it. Hot water with a little milk is the most he allows me. How do you do, dear. (*greeting the others, shaking hands*) How do you do. How do you do. (*crit BUTLER*)

MRS. CASSILIS. How's the General?

LADY MARCHMONT. Very gouty. His temper this morning was atrocious, poor man.

LADY REMENHAM. (*shakes head*) You bear it like a Saint, dear.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*sits R. c. up*) Yes—I go

away a good deal. He finds my absence very soothing. That's why I was so glad to accept Adelaide's invitation when she asked me.

(VICAR offers LADY MARCHMONT cake.)

MRS. CASSILIS. My dear, you'll be invaluable. I look to you to help me with my visitors.

LADY REMENHAM. Poor Margaret. But you always were so unselfish.

LADY MARCHMONT. Are they *very*—?

LADY REMENHAM. *Very!*!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*laughing*) My dear, Lady Remenham knows nothing whatever about them.

LADY REMENHAM. I know everything about them. The girl has no money. She has no position. She became engaged to Geoffrey without your knowledge. She has a perfectly dreadful mother. And her name is Borridge.

LADY MARCHMONT. When are they coming?

MRS. CASSILIS. I expect them in half an hour. The carriage was to go straight back to the station to meet them.

LADY REMENHAM. I hope Geoffrey is conscious of the folly and wickedness of his conduct.

LADY MARCHMONT. Where is he, dear?

MRS. CASSILIS. He's down here with me—and as happy as possible, I'm glad to say.

LADY REMENHAM. Extraordinary! But the young men of the present day *are* extraordinary. Young men nowadays seem always to be either irreclaimably vicious or deplorably silly. I prefer them vicious. They give less trouble. My poor

brother Algernon—you remember Algernon, don't you, Rector? He was another of your pupils.

RECTOR. (*sighs*) Yes, I remember.

MRS. HERRIES. Major Warrington hasn't been down for quite a long time has he?

LADY REMENHAM. No. We don't ask him to Milverton now. He comes to us in London but in the country one has to be more particular. He really is dreadfully dissipated. Always running after some petticoat or other. Often more than one. But there is safety in numbers, don't you think?

RECTOR. Unquestionably.

LADY REMENHAM. Algernon always says he's by temperament a polygamist. I don't know what he means. However, I've no anxiety about *him*. *He never* gets engaged. He's far too *clever* for that. I wonder if he could help you out of this dreadful entanglement? In a case of this kind one should have the very best advice.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*laughing*) I shall be delighted to see Major Warrington—though not for the reason you suggest.

LADY REMENHAM. Well, I'll ask him down. Remenham won't like it. He disapproves of him so much. He gets quite virtuous about it. But that sort of moral indignation should never be allowed to get out of hand, should it? (Rector *nods*) Besides he's away just now. I'll write to Algernon directly I get back and I'll bring him over to dinner one day next week. Say Thursday?

LADY MARCHMONT. Do, dear. I adore Major Warrington.

LADY REMENHAM. I daresay. (*preparing to go*) He isn't *your* brother. Meantime I can ask him whether he knows anything against Mrs. Borridge. But he's sure to. He knows nearly all the detrimental people in London, especially if their daughters are in the least attractive.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*rises*) You'll come *with* him on Thursday, won't you? And Mabel?

(MABEL *rises*.)

LADY REMENHAM. Perhaps that will be best. Then I can keep my brother within bounds. Poor Algernon is apt to take too much champagne unless I am there to prevent him. And now dear, I really must go. (*she and MABEL rise*) Good-bye.

MRS. CASSILIS. You won't stay to meet Mrs. Borridge?

LADY REMENHAM. (*shudders*) I think not. Thursday will be *quite* soon enough. Good-bye Mrs. Herries. (*enter GEOFFREY C.*) Ah *here* is the young man who is causing us all this distress.

GEOFFREY. (*up R. C.*) I, Lady Remenham? (*shakes hands*) How do you do Aunt Margaret. (*shakes hands with others*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*shakes hands*) You. What do you *mean* by getting engaged to someone we none of us know anything about?

MABEL. Mamma!

LADY REMENHAM. I consider your conduct perfectly heartless. Its foolishness needs no comment from me.

GEOFFREY. Really, Lady Remenham!

LADY REMENHAM. Tut, tut, sir. Don't

“really” me. I’m ashamed of you. And now I’ll be off before I quarrel with you. Come Mabel. (*swoops out followed by MABEL. GEOFFREY opens door for them, takes them to their carriage*)

MRS. HERRIES. I think we ought to be going too. Come Hildebrand. (*shakes hands*)

(MRS. CASSILIS rings.)

RECTOR. Good-bye Mrs. Cassilis. Let’s hope everything will turn out for the best.

MRS. HERRIES. It never does. Good-bye.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*L. C. going up with RECTOR*) Good-bye. (*shakes hands warmly*) And you’ll both come and dine on Thursday, won’t you? To-morrow week that is. Major Warrington will want to see his old tutor.

RECTOR. You’re very good. (*they go out c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Dear Lady Remenham! What nonsense she talks. (*coming down L. C.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*at fire*) People who talk as much as that must talk a good deal of nonsense mustn’t they? Otherwise they’d have nothing to say. (*Re-enter GEOFFREY*)

GEOFFREY. Lady Remenham seems ruffled.

LADY MARCHMONT. About your engagement? I’m not surprised. (*coming c.*)

GEOFFREY. I don’t see what it’s got to do with her. (*L. C.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*sits c.*) You must make allowance for a mother’s feelings, my dear Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY. (*patting Mrs. Cassilis’s hand, goes*

to table c.) Lady Remenham isn't my mother, she's my God-mother.

LADY MARCHMONT. She's Mabel's mother.

MRS. CASSILIS. Sh! Margaret.

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear there's no use making mysteries about things. Geoffrey was always supposed to be going to marry Mabel ever since they were children. He knows that.

GEOFFREY. That was only boy and girl talk.

LADY MARCHMONT. For you perhaps.

GEOFFREY. And for her. Mabel never expected—*(pause. He thinks)*

LADY MARCHMONT. Did you ever ask her.

GEOFFREY. But I never supposed——

LADY MARCHMONT. I think you *should* have supposed. A boy should be very careful how he encourages a girl to think of him in that way.

GEOFFREY. But I'd no idea. Of course I like Mabel. I like her awfully. We're like brother and sister. But beyond that—*(pause)* Mother, do *you* think I've behaved badly to Mabel?

MRS. CASSILIS. *(seated on settee L. c.) (Gently)* I think perhaps you've a little disappointed her.

GEOFFREY. Why didn't somebody tell me? How was I to know?

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear boy we couldn't be expected to know you were absolutely blind.

MRS. CASSILIS. Margaret you're not to scold Geoffrey. I won't allow it.

GEOFFREY. Mother dear—you won't allow this to make any difference? With Ethel I mean?

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course not Geoff. *(lays hand on his)*

GEOFFREY. (*seated on arm of settee.*) (*Earnestly*) She's so fond of me. And I'm so fond of her. We were made for each other. I couldn't bear it if you were unkind to her.

MRS. CASSILIS. My dear Geoff. I'm sure Ethel is everything that is sweet and good or my boy wouldn't love her. And I intend to fall in love with her myself directly I set eyes on her.

GEOFFREY. Dear mother! (*pats her hand affectionately. Pause, then thoughtfully*) I'm afraid you'll find *her* mother rather trying—at first. She's not quite a lady you know. . . . But she's very good-natured.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*cheerfully*) Well, well, we shall see. And now run away dear and leave me to talk to Margaret and I'll undertake that all symptoms of crossness shall have disappeared before our visitors arrive.

GEOFFREY. All right, mother. (*kisses her and exits.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. How you spoil that boy?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*lightly*) What else *should* I do with him? He's my only one. Mothers always spoil their sons, don't they? And quarrel with their daughters. More marriages are due to girls being unhappy at home than most people imagine.

LADY MARCHMONT. And yet Geoffrey wants to leave you apparently.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits L. c.*) Evidently I didn't spoil him enough. (*pause*)

LADY MARCHMONT. Well I'm glad you're pleased with this engagement.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sudden change of manner. Her*

face loses its brightness and she suddenly seems to look older) *Pleased* with it. Do you really believe that?

LADY MARCHMONT. Didn't you say so?

MRS. CASSILIS. To Lady Remenham and Mrs. Herries. Yes.

LADY MARCHMONT. And to Geoffrey.

MRS. CASSILIS. And Geoffrey too. Mothers can't always be straightforward with their sons, can they?

LADY MARCHMONT. Why not?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*going nearer to her and becoming intensely serious*) My dear Margaret what would *you* do if your son suddenly wrote to you that he had become engaged to a girl you knew nothing whatever about, a girl far beneath him in social rank?

LADY MARCHMONT. (*firmly*) I should have forbidden the engagement. Forbidden it absolutely.

MRS. CASSILIS. Without seeing the girl?

LADY MARCHMONT. Certainly. The mere fact of her accepting my son before I had ever set eyes on her would have been quite enough.

MRS. CASSILIS. But supposing your son were of age and independent?

LADY MARCHMONT. Geoffrey isn't independent.

MRS. CASSILIS. He has five hundred a year.

LADY MARCHMONT. What's that?

MRS. CASSILIS. Besides Geoffrey knows I should always be willing to help him.

LADY MARCHMONT. That's just it. He ought *not* to have known. You ought to have made it

clear to him from the first that if he married without your consent he would never have a penny from you either now or at your death. Deynham isn't entailed fortunately.

MRS. CASSILIS. But my dear I couldn't disinherit Geoffrey! How could I?

LADY MARCHMONT. (*shrugs*) You could have threatened to. And then the girl wouldn't have accepted him.

MRS. CASSILIS. I don't know. Five hundred a year may seem a considerable sum to her.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*horrificed*) Is it as bad as that?

MRS. CASSILIS. Besides she may be really in love with him.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*impatiently*) What has that to do with it?

MRS. CASSILIS. Young people. In love. They are seldom prudent, are they?

LADY MARCHMONT. (*obstinate*) Still I should have forbidden the engagement.

MRS. CASSILIS. And then?

LADY MARCHMONT. What do you mean?

MRS. CASSILIS. If Geoffrey had defied me? Boys can be very obstinate.

LADY MARCHMONT. I should have refused ever to see him again.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*rises goes L.*) Ah, Margaret, I couldn't do that. Geoffrey is everything I have. He is my only son, my joy and my pride. I couldn't quarrel with him whatever happened. (LADY MARCHMONT *shrugs*) No, Margaret, my plan was the best.

LADY MARCHMONT. What *is* your plan.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits L. c.*) My plan is to give the thing a fair trial. Ask her down here. Ask her mother down here. And see what happens.

LADY MARCHMONT. Nothing else?

MRS. CASSILIS. Nothing else—at present.

LADY MARCHMONT. You could have done that without sanctioning the engagement.

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. But love thrives on opposition. There's a fascination about a runaway match. It has romance. Whereas there's no romance at all about an ordinary wedding. It's only dull and rather vulgar. And after all the girl *may* be presentable.

LADY MARCHMONT. Borridge! I'm not very sanguine about that.

MRS. CASSILIS. Anyhow she's pretty and Geoffrey loves her. That's all we know about her at present.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*rises goes R.*) Wretched boy. To think he should have allowed himself to be caught in this way! . . . (*at chair R. c.*) Don't you think you might have asked the daughter *without* the mother?

MRS. CASSILIS. So Geoffrey suggested. He seemed rather nervous about having her here. She's rather a terrible person, I gather. But I said as we were marrying into the family we mustn't be unkind to her. Poor boy he rather blenched at that. I think he hadn't associated *Mrs.* Borridge with his matrimonial schemes. It's just as well he should do so at once don't you think!

BUTLER. Mrs. and Miss Borridge. (*enter Mrs. BORRIDGE and ETHEL*)

(*Both rise. LADY MARCHMONT goes down L. C. Mrs. CASSILIS down R. C.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*entire change of manner, very sweetly*) How do you do. How do you do, my dear. (*kisses ETHEL*) Tell Mr. Geoffrey, Watson. I hope you've not had a tiring journey, Mrs. Borridge? (*exit BUTLER*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*R. C.*) Not at all Mrs. Cassilis. We 'ad—had—the compartment to ourselves, bein' first class. As I says to my girlie "they'll very likely send the carriage to meet us and it looks better for the servants."

(*ETHEL crosses R. up.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*C. still sweetly*) Let me introduce you. Mrs. Borridge—Lady Marchmont, Miss Borridge. (*LADY MARCHMONT bows*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*extends gloved hand*) How do you do, Lady Marchmont. Proud I'm sure. (*enter GEOFFREY hurriedly*)

(*MRS. CASSILIS L. C.*)

GEOFFREY. How do you do, Mrs. Borridge. Ethel dear how long have you been here? I didn't hear you come. (*kisses her*)

ETHEL. We've only just got here.

(*LADY MARCHMONT sits down R. C.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*sits up R. C.*) Don't apologise, Geoffy. Your Ma's been entertaining us most kind.

GEOFFREY. (*with look of gratitude to Mrs. Cassilis*) Dear mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well, how *are* you Geoffy? You *look* first-rate.

(*Mrs. Cassilis sits L. C. up.*)

GEOFFREY. Oh I'm all right.

MRS. BORRIDGE. And what a fine 'ouse—house—you've got! Quite a palace I declare!

GEOFFREY. I'm glad you like it.

MRS. BORRIDGE. And it'll all be your's some day. Won't it?

ETHEL. (*pulls her sleeve*) Mother!

GEOFFREY. That's as my mother decides.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Then you're sure to 'ave it. I know what mothers are! And what a 'andsome room too. Quite like the Metropole at Brighton. (*enter MAID, C. very smartly dressed in black*)

MAID. Can I have your keys, Madam?

MRS. BORRIDGE. My keys?

(*GEOFFREY works L. C.*)

MAID. The keys of your trunks, Madam.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Certainly not. Who ever 'eard of such a thing?

MAID. I thought you might wish me to unpack for you, Madam.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Oh. *Did* you! I don't want no strange girls ferriting in *my* boxes. (*ETHEL nudges her arm*) What is it, Eth? Oh, very well. But I'm not going to let her all the same. No thank you.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*rises*) Mrs. BorrIDGE will un-

pack for herself, Dorset. (*MAID bows going*) Wait a moment. (*MAID pauses*) Would you like to take off your things at once, Mrs. Borridge? If so, Dorset shall show you your room. And I'll have some tea sent up to you there. You'll want it after your journey. (*feels tea pot*) This is quite cold. What do you say, Ethel?

ETHEL. Thank you Mrs. Cassilis. A cup of tea would be very nice.

MRS. CASSILIS. Show Mrs. Borridge her room, Dorset. (*MRS. BORRIDGE rises*) And take her up some tea. Dinner will be at eight. You'll ring if there's anything you want, won't you?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Thank you, Mrs. Cassilis. (*crit.* GEOFFREY *kisses* ETHEL *styly in passing.* MRS. CASSILIS *comes down R. C. with slight shudder*)

GEOFFREY. (*enthusiastic*) Well mother, *what* do you think of her! Isn't she *sweet*? (*coming down L. C.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses to him L. C.*) She's very pretty, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. And *good*! You don't know how *good* she is!

MRS. CASSILIS. So long as she's good to my boy that's all I ask.

GEOFFREY. Dearest mother. (*kisses her demonstratively*) Now I'll go and dress. (*exit C.*)

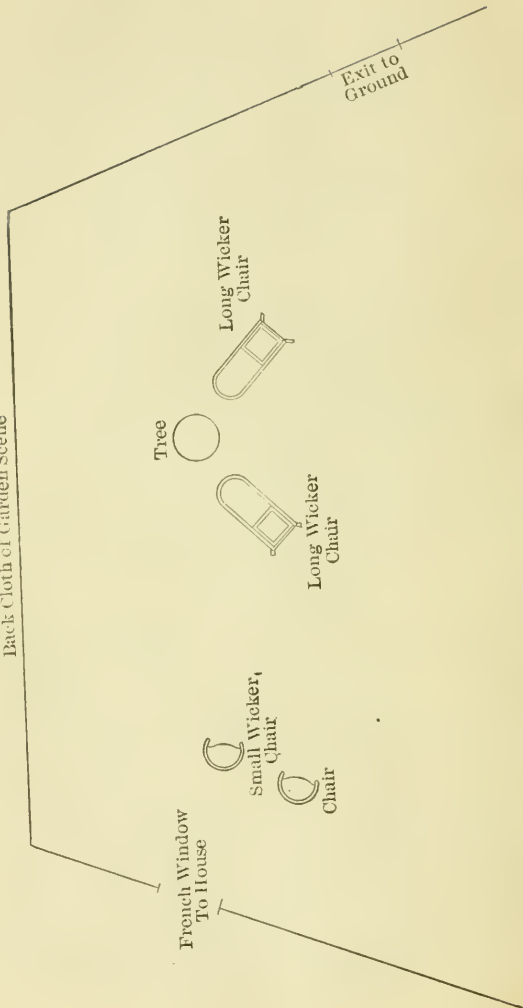
LADY MARCHMONT. (*pause, rises*) And *that's* the girl your son is to marry.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*standing C. by table*) Marry her!—Nonsense, my dear Margaret.

CURTAIN.

SCENE PLOT. ACT II

Back Cloth of Garden Scene



ACT II.

SCENE:—*The lawn at Deynham. Long chairs under shade of trees c. On R. terrace of the house from which steps lead down to lawn. French windows from house on to terrace (open.) An exit up L. to other part of grounds. Another exit down L. to the strawberry beds. The stage is empty when curtain rises. Then enter from house MRS. CASSILIS followed by ETHEL, and a little later, MRS. BORRIDGE. MRS. CASSILIS is dressed in a charming morning gown. She and ETHEL carry parasols. ETHEL wears a simple white blouse and skirt, Mrs. BORRIDGE in green blouse rather bright in color.*

MRS. CASSILIS. Shall we come out on the lawn? It's such a perfect morning.

ETHEL. That *will* be jolly Mrs. Cassilis. (*they come down*) When I'm in the country I shall always eat too much breakfast and then spend the morning on a long chair digesting it. So will mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. How you go on, dearie!

MRS. CASSILIS. Try this chair then. (*slightly moving long chair forward*) Mrs. Borridge what kind of chair do *you* like?

MRS. BORRIDGE. This'll do. I'm not particular. (*subsides into another long chair*) Am I showing my ankles, Eth?

ETHEL. Sh! mother! (*giggles*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well I only asked, dearie.

MRS. CASSILIS. I wonder if you'd like a cushion for your head? Try this. (*puts vivid red cushion behind vivid green blouse. The effect is electrifying*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. That's better.

ETHEL. I call this Heaven, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. CASSILIS. That's right, my dear. (*patting her shoulder*) Are you fond of the country?

ETHEL. I don't know. I've never been there so far. Not to the real country I mean. Mums and I have a week at Brighton now and then. And once we went for a month to Broadstairs after I had the measles. But that's not exactly country, is it?

MRS. CASSILIS. You're sure to like it. Geoffrey loves it. He's never so happy as when he's pottering about Deynham with his gun. (*crosses R. c. sits*)

ETHEL. Doesn't he get tired of that?

MRS. CASSILIS. Oh, no. Besides he doesn't do that all the year round. He rides a great deal. We've very good hunting at Deynham. Are you fond of horses?

ETHEL. I can't bear them, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. BORRIDGE. When she was a little tot her father put 'er—her—on a pony and she fell off. It didn't hurt 'er but the doctor said 'er nerve was shook. And now she can't bear horses.

MRS. CASSILIS. What a pity! I do hope you won't be dull while you're with us. Perhaps you're fond of walking?

ETHEL. Yes. I don't mind walking—for a little. If there's anything to walk *to*.

MRS. CASSILIS. We often walk up Milverton Hill on fine afternoons to see the view. It's the highest point about here.

ETHEL. (*stifling a yawn*) Is it, Mrs. Cassilis?

MRS. CASSILIS. And no doubt we shall find other things to amuse you. What *do* you like?

ETHEL. Oh, shops and theatres, and lunching at restaurants and dancing, and oh, lots of things.

MRS. CASSILIS. I'm afraid we've no shops nearer than Leicester, and that's twelve miles away. And we've no restaurants at all. But I daresay we could get up a dance for you.

ETHEL. (*clapping her hands*) That'll be *sweet!* I simply *love* dancing. And all the rest of the time I shall sit on the lawn and grow fat, like Mummy. (*protest from Mrs. BORRIDGE.*) Oh, yes, I shall.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Ethel, don't be saucy.

ETHEL. (*laughing*) Mummy, if you scold me you'll have to go in. It's far too hot to be scolded.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Isn't she a spoil't girl, Mrs. Cassilis? What they taught you at that boarding school, Miss, *I* don't know. Not manners, *I* can see.

ETHEL. (*ruffling her mother's wig*) There! there! Mums. Was 'em's cross?

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*pettishly*) Stop it, Ethel,

stop it, I say. Whatever will Mrs. Cassilis think of you!

(ETHEL *sits again in chair c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Don't scold her, Mrs. Borridge. It's so pleasant to see a little high spirits, isn't it?

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*beaming*) Well, if *you* don't mind, Mrs. Cassilis, *I* don't. But it's not the way girls were taught to behave in *my* young days.

ETHEL. (*slight yawn*) That was so long ago, Mums!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*rising*) Well, I must go and see after my house-keeping. Can you entertain each other while I'm away for a little? My sister will be down soon, I hope. She had breakfast in her room. And Geoffrey will be back in half an hour. I asked him to ride over to Milverton for me with a note.

ETHEL. We shall be all right, Mrs. Cassilis. Mother'll go to sleep. She always does if you make her too comfortable. And then she'll snore, won't you, Mums? (*exit Mrs. CASSILIS R., with a ghastly smile*).

MRS. BORRIDGE. Ethel, you shouldn't talk like that before Mrs. Cassilis. She won't like it.

ETHEL. Oh yes she will. And I'm going to make her like *me* awfully. What lovely clothes she has! I wish *you* had lovely clothes, Mums.

MRS. BORRIDGE. What's the matter with my clothes, dearie? I 'ad on my best silk last night. And I bought this blouse special in the Grove only a week ago so as to do you credit.

ETHEL. I know. Still . . . Couldn't you have chosen something *quieter*?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Oh no, dearie. I 'ate quiet things.

ETHEL. *Hate*, mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. *Hate* then. Give me something *cheerful*.

ETHEL. (*hopelessly*) Very well, Mummy.

MRS. BORRIDGE. But *do* be careful what you say before Mrs. Cassilis. She's not used to girls being so free.

ETHEL. Oh, yes she is, Mums. All girls are like that nowadays. All girls that are ladies, I mean. They bet and talk slang and smoke cigarettes and play bridge. I know all about that. I've read all about it in the "Ladies Mail." One of them put ice down her young man's back at dinner and when he broke off his engagement she only laughed.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*lamentably*) Oh, dear, I do hope there won't be ice for dinner to-night.

(ETHEL *goes to her, sits on R. arm of chair.*)

ETHEL. (*laughing*) Poor Mums, don't be anxious. I'll be *very* careful, I promise you.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You're so 'eadstrong. And I *do* want to see you married and respectable. I wasn't always respectable myself, and I know what it means for a girl. Your sister Nan, she's gay, she is. She 'adn't no ambition. An' look what she is now!

ETHEL. If Geoff. were to hear of it! (*going down R. C. to back of chair C.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. 'E won't. Not 'e! I've seen to that.

ETHEL. These things always get known somehow.

(ETHEL sits again on her chair R. C.)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Nan's changed 'er name. Calls 'erself Mrs. Seymour. An' she never comes to see us now. If she did, I'd show 'er the door fast enough. Disgracin' us like that!

ETHEL. Poor Nan!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Don't you pity 'er. She don't deserve it. She treated us like dirt. She's a bad 'un all through. I've done things myself as I didn't ought to 'ave done. But I've always *wanted* to be respectable. But it's not so easy when you've your living to make and no one to look to. (ETHEL nods) Yes, I've 'ad my bad times, dearie. But I've pulled through them. And I *made* your father marry me. No one can deny that. It wasn't easy. An' I had to give him all my savings before 'e'd say yes. And then I wasn't 'appy till we'd been to church. But 'e did marry me in the end. An' then *you* was born, an' I says my girl shall be brought up respectable. She shall be a lady. And some day, when she's married an' ridin' in her carriage, she'll say "it's all mother's doing." (pause)

ETHEL. How long *were* you married to father, Mums?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Only eight years, dearie. Before that I was 'is 'ouse-keeper.

ETHEL. *His*, Mummy.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Very well, dearie. Father

drank 'isself to death the year Ben d'or won the Ledger. He lost a pot o' money over that, and it preyed on 'is mind. So he took to the drink. If he 'adn't insured 'is life an' kep' the premiums payed we should 'ave been in the 'ouse, that's where we should 'ave been, dearie.

ETHEL. Poor dad!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. 'e 'ad 'is faults. But 'e was a kind 'earted man, was Joe Borrige. 'E died much respected. (*cheering up*) An' now you're engaged to a *real* gentleman! *That's* the sort for my Eth!

ETHEL. Oh! Sh! Mums. (*rises, looking round nervously*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. No one'll hear. And if they do what's the harm? You've got 'is promise.

(*ETHEL standing by her mother c.*)

ETHEL. *His*, Mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You can hold 'im—him—to it.

ETHEL. Yes. Besides Geoff's awfully in love with me. And I really rather like *him*, you know, —in a way.

MRS. BORRIDGE. *I* know, dearie. Still I'd get something from 'im on paper if I was you, something that'll 'old 'im. The men takes a bit of 'old-ing nowadays. They're that slippy! You get something that'll 'old 'im. That's what I always say to girls. Letters is best. Oh, the chances I've seen missed through not gettin' something on paper!

ETHEL. You needn't worry, Mummy. Geoff's all right.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I daresay. Still I'd like something the lawyers can take hold of. Geoffrey may get tired of you, dearie. Men are that changeable. *I know them!*

ETHEL. He'd better not! I'd make him *pay* for it!

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*approving*) So you could, dearie, so long as you 'ad somethin' on paper. (ETHEL *shrugs impatiently*) Well if you won't you won't. But if anythin' happens don't say I didn't warn you. (ETHEL *crosses R. Pause*) I wish Geoffy was a lord, like Lord Buckfastleigh.

ETHEL. *I don't. (sits in chair R.)*

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well not *just* like Buckfastleigh per'aps. But still a lord. You never did like Buckfastleigh.

ETHEL. That old beast!

MRS. BORRIDGE. He's been a good friend to us, dearie. And he is an Earl whatever you may say.

ETHEL. Pah!

MRS. BORRIDGE. And he's rich. Richer than Geoffy. And he's awfully sweet on you dearie. I believe he'd 'ave married you if 'is old woman 'ad turned up 'er toes last autumn. And he's seventy-three. He wouldn't 'ave lasted long.

ETHEL. I wouldn't marry him if he were twice as rich—and twice as old.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I daresay you're right, dearie. He's a queer 'un is Buckfastleigh. But he offered to settle five thousand down if you'd go to Paris with 'im. Five thousand down on the nail. He wasn't what you'd call sober when he said it but he meant it. I daresay he'd 'ave made it seven

if you hadn't boxed 'is ears. (ETHEL *laughs*) Wasn't I savage when you did that, dearie. But you was right 'as it turned out. For Geoffy proposed next day and now you'll be a real married woman. There's nothing like being married. It's so respectable. When you're married you can look down on people. And that's what every woman wants. That's why I pinched and screwed and sent you to boarding school. I said my girlie shall be a real lady. And she is.

ETHEL. (*rises*) Is she, Mums? (*goes up*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Of course dearie. That's why she's 'ere. Deynham Abbey, *two* footmen in livery, fire in 'er bedroom, evenin' dress every night of 'er life. *Lady* Marchmont invited to meet her! Everythin' tip top! And it's not a bit too good for my girl. It's what she was made for.

ETHEL. (*thoughtfully*) I wish Johnny Travers had had some money. Then I could have married *him*.

MRS. BORRIDGE. *Married* 'im—him! Married a auctioneer's clerk without twopence to bless 'isself. I should think not indeed! Not likely!

ETHEL. Still I was awfully gone on Johnny.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Nonsense Eth. I should 'ope we can look 'igher than *that*!

ETHEL. Sh! mother. Here's Geoff. (*enter GEOFFREY L. in riding breeches*)

GEOFFREY Good morning dear, (*kisses* ETHEL) I thought I should be back earlier but I rode over to Milverton for the mater. (*to* MRS. BORRIDGE) Good morning.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*archly*) You 'aven't no kisses to spare for me, 'ave you, Geoffy? Never mind. You keep 'em all for my girl. She's worth 'em.

GEOFFREY. (*caressing her hand*) Dear Ethel.

MRS. BORRIDGE. How well you look in those riding togs, Geoffrey! Don't 'e Eth? (*preparing to go*)

ETHEL. Geoff always looks well in everything.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*rising from chair*) Well I'll go indoors and leave you two to spoon. That's what you want *I* know. I'll go and talk to your ma. (*exit R. beaming*)

GEOFFREY. (*picking rose and bringing it to her*) A rose for the prettiest girl in England.

ETHEL. Oh Geoff, do you think so?

GEOFFREY. Of course. The prettiest and the best. (*holds her hand*)

ETHEL. You do really love me Geoff, don't you?

GEOFF. Do you doubt it? (*kisses her*)

ETHEL. No. You're much too good for me, you know. (*comes down R. with him*)

GEOFFREY. Nonsense, darling.

ETHEL. It's the truth. You're a gentleman and rich and have fine friends. While mother and I are common as common.

GEOFFREY. You're not.

ETHEL. Oh yes we are. Of course I've been to school, and been taught things. But what's education? It can't alter how we're made, can it? And she and I are the same underneath.

GEOFFREY. Ethel you're not to say such things, or to think them.

ETHEL. But they're true Geoff.

GEOFFREY. They're not. (*kisses her*) Say they're not.

ETHEL. No.

GEOFFREY. Say they're not. (*kisses her*) Not!

ETHEL. Very well. They're not.

GEOFFREY. That's right. (*kiss*) There's a reward.

ETHEL. (*pulling herself away*) I wonder if I did right to say "yes" when you asked me, Geoff? Right for *you* I mean.

GEOFFREY. Of course you did, darling. You love me, don't you?

ETHEL. But wouldn't it have been best for you if I'd said "no"? Then you'd have married Lady Somebody or other with lots and lots of money and lived happy ever afterwards.

GEOFFREY. (*indignantly*) I shouldn't.

ETHEL. Oh yes you would.

GEOFFREY. (*sits on chair c.*) And what would *you* have done, pray

ETHEL. Oh I should have taken up with someone else or perhaps married old Buckfastleigh when his wife died.

GEOFFREY. Ethel!

ETHEL. I should. I'm not the sort to go on moping for long. I should have been awfully down for a bit and missed you every day. But by and by I should have cheered up and married someone else. I could have done it. I could!

GEOFFREY. (*goes to her*) And what about *me*?

ETHEL. Wouldn't you have been happier in the

end, dear? I'm not the sort of wife you ought to have married. Some day I expect you'll come to hate me. (*sighs*) Heigho.

GEOFFREY. You know I shan't dear.

ETHEL. But I did so want to marry a gentleman. Mother wanted it too. So I said "yes" you see.

GEOFFREY. (*pulling her up*) Darling! (*kiss*) (*pause*)

ETHEL. (*they cross to L. his arm round her waist*) Geoff, what did *your* mother say when you told her we were engaged? Was she dreadfully down about it?

GEOFFREY. No.

ETHEL. On your honour!

GEOFFREY. On my honour. Mother never said a single word to me against it. Lady Marchmont scolded me a bit. She's my Aunt you see.

ETHEL. Old cat!

GEOFFREY. And so did Lady Remenham. She's my Godmother. But mother stood up for us all through.

ETHEL. (*sighs, crosses R.*) I shall never get on with all your fine friends, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. You will. Anyone who's as pretty as my Ethel can get on anywhere.

ETHEL. Yes I *am* pretty aren't I? I'm glad of that. It makes a difference, doesn't it?

GEOFFREY. Of course. In a week you'll have them all running after you.

ETHEL. Shall I, Geoff? Won't that be splendid! (*kisses him*) Oh, Geoff I'm so happy. When shall we be married?

GEOFFREY. I'm afraid not till next year, dear. Next June mother says.

ETHEL. That's a *long* way off, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Yes, but mother says you're to be here a *great* deal between now and then, almost all the time in fact. So it won't be so bad, will it?

ETHEL. (*goes to chair R. sits*) Why does your mother want it put off till then?

GEOFFREY. Something about the London season she said. We shall be married in London of course because your mother's house is there.

ETHEL. Oh yes, of course.

GEOFFREY. And besides mother says she never believes in very short engagements. She says girls sometimes don't quite know their own minds. (*goes to her*) I said I was sure *you* weren't like that. But she asked me to promise, so I did.

ETHEL. Well that's settled then. (*jumping up*) And won't it be nice to be married. Really married. (*crosses to L.*) And now I want to *do* something. I'm tired sitting still. What shall it be?

GEOFFREY. (*crosses to her*) We might go a walk up Milverton Hill. The view there's awfully fine. (*looks at watch*) But there's hardly time before lunch.

ETHEL. Besides I should spoil my shoes. (*shows elegant towny shoe*)

GEOFFREY. Suppose we go to the strawberry bed and eat strawberries?

ETHEL. (*clapping her hands*) Oh yes, that'll be splendid. I can be so deliciously greedy over

strawberries. (*puts her arm in his and leads him off L.* Enter MRS. CASSILIS, LADY MARCHMONT and MRS. BORRIDGE from house R. as they are going)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*affectionately*) Going for a stroll, dears?

GEOFFREY. Only as far as the strawberry bed, mother dear.

MRS. CASSILIS. Oughtn't dear Ethel to have a hat? The sun is very hot there.

ETHEL. I've got a parasol Mrs. Cassilis. (*ex-cunt L.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. You weren't down to breakfast Lady Marchmont.

LADY MARCHMONT. No, I—had a headache.

MRS. CASSILIS. Poor Margaret.

MRS. BORRIDGE. It's 'eadachy weather isn't it? (*sits R.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. I suppose it is.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Or perhaps it was the oyster patties last night? I've often noticed after an oyster I come over quite queer. Specially if it isn't *quite* fresh.

LADY MARCHMONT. Indeed!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. But crabs is worse. Crabs is simply poison to me.

LADY MARCHMONT. How extraordinary.

MRS. BORRIDGE. They are I do assure you. If I touch a crab I'm that ill nobody would believe it.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*up c.*) Well, Margaret, (*LADY MARCHMONT sits c.*) I expect you oughtn't to be talked to or it will make your head worse. You

stay here quietly and rest while I take Mrs. Borridge for a stroll in the garden.

LADY MARCHMONT. Thank you. My head is a little bad still.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Try a drop of brandy, Lady Marchmont. My 'usband always said there's nothing like brandy if you're feeling poorly.

LADY MARCHMONT. Thank you. I think I'll just try what rest will do.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*making LADY MARCHMONT comfortable*) I expect that will be best. Put your head back, dear. Headaches are such trying things aren't they, Mrs. Borridge? This way. And you're to keep quiet till luncheon Margaret.

(MRS. CASSILIS and MRS. BORRIDGE *exeunt* L. *up*.)

(LADY MARCHMONT *closes her eyes with a sigh of relief*. After a moment enter BUTLER with MRS. HERRIES from house R.

BUTLER. Mrs. Herries.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*rises goes up to meet her*) How do you do. Mrs. Cassilis is in the garden, Watson. (*to MRS. HERRIES.*) She has just gone for a stroll with Mrs. Borridge.

MRS. HERRIES. Oh, pray don't disturb her. Pray don't. I can only stay for a moment. Literally a moment.

LADY MARCHMONT. But she would be so sorry to miss you. Will you let her know Watson. She went that way.

BUTLER. Yes, my lady. (*exit* L. *up*.)

LADY MARCHMONT. And how's the dear Rector? (*sits c.*) You've not brought him with you?

MRS. HERRIES. No. He was too busy. There is always so much to do in these *small* parishes, isn't there?

LADY MARCHMONT. Indeed?

MRS. HERRIES. Oh yes. There's the garden—and the pigs. The Rector is devoted to his pigs, you know. And his roses.

LADY MARCHMONT. The Rector's roses are quite famous, aren't they?

MRS. HERRIES. (R. c., *lowering her voice and leaning forward*) And now tell me dear Lady Marchmont, before Mrs. Cassilis comes back, what is she like?

LADY MARCHMONT. (R. *laughing*) Really, dear Mrs. Herries, I think I must leave you to decide that for yourself.

MRS. HERRIES. So bad as that! The Rector feared so. And the mother? (*no answer*) Just so! What a pity. An *orphan* is so much easier to deal with.

LADY MARCHMONT. You may be glad to hear that Mr. Borridge is dead.

MRS. HERRIES. So Mrs. Cassilis said. How fortunate! How very fortunate! (*enter Mrs. CASSILIS L. followed by Mrs. BORRIDGE*)

MRS. HERRIES. Dear Mrs. Cassilis how do you do. *How* are you?

MRS. CASSILIS. Quite well, thanks. It's Margaret who is unwell.

MRS. HERRIES. Indeed! She didn't mention it.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*hurriedly*) I have a headache.

MRS. HERRIES. I'm so *sorry*.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sweetly*) You have heard of my son's engagement, haven't you? Dear Ethel is with us now I'm glad to say. Let me introduce you to her mother.

MRS. HERRIES. (*politely frigid*) How do you do. (*bows*) What charming weather we're having aren't we?

MRS. CASSILIS. You'll stay to luncheon now you are here, won't you?

(*Mrs. BORRIDGE sits L.*)

MRS. HERRIES. I'm afraid I mustn't. I left the Rector at home. He will be expecting me.

(*Cross LADY MARCHMONT. goes up C.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Why didn't you bring him with you?

MRS. HERRIES. So kind of you dear Mrs. Cassilis. (*nervously*) But he hardly liked—How is poor Geoffrey?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*correcting her—hastily*) He's very well. He's in the kitchen garden with Ethel. At the strawberry bed. You'll see them if you wait.

MRS. HERRIES. I'm afraid I can't. In fact I must run away at once. I only looked in in passing. It's nearly one o'clock and the Rector always likes his luncheon at one. Good-bye dear Mrs. Cassilis. Good-bye Mrs. Borridge.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*stretching out her hand*) Good-bye Mrs.—I didn't rightly catch your name.

MRS. HERRIES. Herries. Mrs. Herries. (*shakes hands nervously*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Good-bye Mrs. Ferris.

MRS. CASSILIS. And you're coming over to dine on Thursday? That's to-day week, you know. And the Rector of course. You won't forget!

MRS. HERRIES. With pleasure. Good-bye Lady Marchmont. (*looks at Mrs. BORRIDGE who has turned away, then at LADY MARCHMONT, then exits.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. I think I'll be going in Mrs. Cassilis, just to put myself straight for dinner.

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. Do. Luncheon will be ready in half an hour. (*exit Mrs. BORRIDGE. To LADY MARCHMONT who sinks limply into chair. Mrs. CASSILIS resumes her natural voice*) How's your headache Margaret? Better?

LADY MARCHMONT. Quite well! In fact I never had a headache. That was a little deception on my part, dear to excuse my absence from the breakfast table. Will you forgive me? (Mrs. CASSILIS *nods without a smile. Pause*) (Mrs. CASSILIS *goes round tree to L.*) Breakfasts are rather a mistake aren't they. So trying to the temper. And that awful woman! I felt a brute for deserting you. On the very first morning too. But I didn't feel strong enough to face her again so soon. How *could* Geoffrey do it!

MRS. CASSILIS. Geoffrey's not going to marry Mrs. Borridge.

LADY MARCHMONT. He's going to marry the daughter. And she'll grow like her mother ultimately. All girls do, poor things.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits L. C.*) Poor Geoffrey. I suppose there's something wrong in the way we

bring boys up. When they reach manhood they seem quite unable to distinguish between the right sort of woman and—the other sort. A pretty face and they're caught at once. It's only after they've lived for a few years in the world and got soiled and hardened—got what we call experience in fact—that they even begin to understand the difference.

LADY MARCHMONT. You ought to have sent Geoffrey to a public school. His father ought to have insisted on it.

MRS. CASSILIS. Poor Charley died when Geoff was only twelve. And when I was left alone I couldn't make up my mind to part with him. Besides I hate the way public-schoolboys look on women.

LADY MARCHMONT. Still it's a safe-guard.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sighs*) Perhaps it is. (*pause. Mrs. Cassilis looks utterly depressed*)

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear Adelaide don't look like that. You frighten me.

MRS. CASSILIS. What's the matter?

LADY MARCHMONT. Your face looked absolutely *grey*! Didn't you sleep last night?

MRS. CASSILIS. Not very much. (*trying to smile*) Has my hair gone grey too?

LADY MARCHMONT. Of course not.

MRS. CASSILIS. I feared it might.

LADY MARCHMONT. You poor dear! (*pause goes to her*)

MRS. CASSILIS. I *am* pretty still am I not, Margaret?

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear you look perfectly

sweet as you always do. Only there *are* one or two little lines I hadn't noticed before. But your *hair's* lovely.

MRS. CASSILIS. I'm glad of that. I shall need all my looks now—for Geoffrey's sake.

LADY MARCHMONT. Geoffrey's? (*sits on arm of chair c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Looks mean so much to a man, don't they? And he has always admired me. Now I shall want him to admire me more than ever.

LADY MARCHMONT. Why dear?

MRS. CASSILIS. Because I have a rival.

LADY MARCHMONT. This detestable girl?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*nods*) Yes.

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear Adelaide, isn't it too late now?

MRS. CASSILIS. Too late? Why the time has scarcely begun. At present Geoffrey is over head and ears in love with her. While that goes on we can do nothing. But it won't last.

LADY MARCHMONT. Won't it?

MRS. CASSILIS. No. That kind of love never does. It dies because it is a thing of the senses only. It has no foundation in reason, in common tastes, common interests, common associations. So it dies. *My* place is by its death bed.

LADY MARCHMONT. That sounds rather ghoul-ish.

MRS. CASSILIS. It is.

LADY MARCHMONT. Are you going to do anything to hasten its demise?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*quite practically*) Oh yes. In

the first place they're to stay here for a *long* visit. I want them to feel thoroughly at home. Vulgar people are so much more vulgar when they feel at home, aren't they.

LADY MARCHMONT. You can hardly expect any change in *that* direction from *Mrs.* Borridge.

MRS. CASSILIS. I suppose not. Then I shall ask lots of people to meet them. Oh *lots* of people. So that Geoffrey may have the benefit of the contrast. I've asked Mabel to stay by the way—for a week—to help to entertain dear Ethel. When those two are together it should open Geoffrey's eyes more than anything.

LADY MARCHMONT. Love is blind.

MRS. CASSILIS. It sees a great deal better than it used to do, dear. Far better than it did when *we* were young people.

LADY MARCHMONT. Anything else?

MRS. CASSILIS. Not at the moment. Yes, by the way. There's Major Warrington.

LADY MARCHMONT. You're not really going to consult that dissipated wretch?

MRS. CASSILIS. I would consult the Witch of Endor if I thought she could help me—and if I knew her address. Oh I am prepared to go any lengths. I wonder if he would elope with her for a consideration?

LADY MARCHMONT. (*shocked*) Adelaide you wouldn't do that. It would be dreadful. Think of the scandal.

MRS. CASSILIS. My dear if she would elope with Watson I'd raise his wages. (*rises*)

LADY MARCHMONT. Adelaide!

Mrs. CASSILIS. I would. Ah Margaret you've no children. You don't know how it feels to see your son wrecking his life and not be able to prevent it. I love my son better than anything else in the whole world. There is nothing I wouldn't do to save him. That is how mothers are made. That's what we're for.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*slight shrug*) Poor girl!

Mrs. CASSILIS. (*vehemently*) You're *not* to pity her, Margaret. I forbid you. She tried to steal away my son.

LADY MARCHMONT. Still

Mrs. CASSILIS. (*impatiently*) Margaret don't be sentimental. The girl's not in love with Geoffrey. Anyone can see that. She's in love with his position and his money, the money he will have some day. She doesn't really care two straws for him. It was a trap, a trap from the beginning, and poor Geoff blundered into it.

LADY MARCHMONT. She couldn't *make* the omnibus horse fall down!

Mrs. CASSILIS. No. That was chance. But after that she set herself to catch him, and her mother egged her on no doubt and taught her how to play her fish. And you pity her!

LADY MARCHMONT. (*soothingly*) I don't really. At least I did for a moment. But I suppose you're right.

Mrs. CASSILIS. Of course I'm right. I'm Geoffrey's mother. Who should know if I don't? Mothers have eyes. If she really cared for him I should know. I might try to blind myself but I

should *know*. But she doesn't. And she sha'n't marry him. She sha'n't!

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear don't glare at me like that. *I'm* not trying to make the match.

MRS. CASSILIS. Was I glaring?

LADY MARCHMONT. You looked rather tigerish. (MRS. CASSILIS *gives short laugh, pause*) By the way as she is *not* to be your daughter-in-law is it necessary to be quite so affectionate to her all the time? It rather gets on my nerves.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses L.*) It is absolutely necessary. If there were any coolness between us the girl would be on her guard and Geoffrey would take her side. (L.) That would be fatal. (*coming L. c.*) Geoffrey must never know how I feel towards her. No! When this engagement is broken off I shall kiss her affectionately at parting and when the carriage comes round I shall shed tears.

LADY MARCHMONT. Why?

MRS. CASSILIS. (L. c.) Because otherwise it would make a division between Geoffrey and me. And I couldn't bear that. I must keep his love whatever happens. (*crosses R.*) And if I have to deceive him a little to keep it, isn't that what we women always have to do? (*sits R.*) In fact I shall have to deceive everybody except you, Lady Remenham, Mrs. Herries, the whole county. If they once knew they would be sure to talk. Lady Remenham never does anything else, does she? And later on, when the engagement was all over and done with, Geoffrey would get to hear of it and he'd never forgive me.

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear, your unscrupulousness appalls me. (Mrs. Cassilis *shrugs impatiently*) Well, it's not very *nice*, you must admit.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*exasperated*) Nice! of course it's not *nice*! Good Heavens, Margaret you don't suppose I *like* doing this sort of thing, do you? I do it because I must, because it's the only way to save Geoffrey. If Geoffrey married her, he'd be miserable, and I won't have that. Of course it would be *pleasanter* to be perfectly straightforward and tell the girl I detest her but if I did she'd marry Geoff if only to spite me. So I must trap her as she has trapped him. It's not a *nice* game but it's the only possible one. Yes, I must be on the best of terms with Ethel. And *you* must make friends with that appalling mother.

LADY MARCHMONT. No, Adelaide! I refuse!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses to her, lifts her up*) You must. You *must*. (*takes her two hands and looks into her eyes*)

LADY MARCHMONT. Very well. I'll do my best. (Mrs. Cassilis *goes up R. C.*) But I sha'n't come down to breakfast! There are limits to my endurance. And I do so hate breakfasting in my room. The crumbs always get into my bed.

MRS. CASSILIS. Never mind. When we've won you shall share the glory.

LADY MARCHMONT. You are going to win?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*nods*) I am going to win. (*coming down C. a little*) I've no doubt whatever about that. I've brains and she hasn't. And

brains always tell in the end. Besides she did something this morning which made me sure that I should win.

LADY MARCHMONT. She didn't eat with her knife?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits on end of chair c.*) No. She *yawned*.

LADY MARCHMONT. Yawned?

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. Three times. When I saw that I knew that I should win.

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear Adelaide what *do* you mean?

MRS. CASSILIS. Girls like that can't endure boredom. They're used to excitement, the vulgar excitement of Bohemian life in London. Theatres, supper parties, plenty of fast society. She owned as much this morning. Well down here she shall be dull, oh how *dull*! I will see to that. The curate shall come to dinner. And old Lady Belairs with her tracts and her trumpet. I've arranged that it shall be a *long* engagement. She shall yawn to some purpose before it's over. And when she's bored she'll get cross. You'll see. She'll begin to quarrel with her mother and nag at Geoffrey—at everyone in fact except me. I shall be too sweet to her for that! And that will be the beginning of the end.

LADY MARCHMONT. Well dear I think your plan diabolical but your courage is perfectly splendid and I love you for it. (*rises, lays hand on her's*) And now I'll go in and get ready for lunch. (*they rise. She goes R. meets BUTLER and MABEL*)

BUTLER. (*showing in MABEL in riding habit*)
Lady Mabel Venning.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*rising*) Ah, Mabel dear, how are you. (*kisses her*) You've ridden over? But you're going to *stay* here you know. Haven't you brought your things?

MABEL. Mamma is sending them after me. It was such a perfect morning for a ride. How do you do, Lady Marchmont.

MRS. CASSILIS. That's right. Watson tell them to take Lady Mabel's horse round to the stables. She will keep it here while she is with us. Then you'll be able to ride every day with Geoffrey. (*to LADY MARCHMONT*) Poor Ethel doesn't ride. Isn't it unfortunate.

LADY MARCHMONT. Very!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits L. c.*) She and Geoffrey are down at the strawberry bed spoiling their appetites for luncheon. Would you like to join them?

MABEL. I think not thanks. It's rather hot isn't it. (*comes to c.*) I think I'd rather stay here with you.

MRS. CASSILIS. As you please, dear.

MABEL. (*sits*) Oh before I forget, Mamma asked me to tell you she telegraphed to Uncle Algernon yesterday and he's coming down next Wednesday. She had a letter from him this morning by the second post. It came just before I started. Such a funny letter. Mamma asked me to bring it to you to read. (*gives letter, sits c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*taking it*) "My dear Julia:

I am at a loss to understand to what I owe the honor of an invitation to Milverton. I thought I had forfeited all claim to it forever. I can only suppose you have at last found an heiress to marry me. If this is so I may as well say at once that unless she is both extremely rich and extremely pretty I shall decline to entertain her proposal. My experience is that that is a somewhat unusual combination. I will be with you next Wednesday. Your affectionate brother, A. L. Warrington." (*giving back letter*) That's right then. And now I think I'll just go down into the garden and tell Geoffrey you're here. No don't come too. You stay and entertain Margaret. (*exit L. to strawberry bed*)

LADY MARCHMONT. Dear Major Warrington. He always was the most delightfully witty wicked creature. I'm so glad he's coming while I'm here. Adelaide must be sure and ask him over.

MABEL. Uncle Algernon is coming over to dine this day week—with mamma.

LADY MARCHMONT. To be sure. I remember.

(*Enter GEOFFREY quickly L.*)

GEOFFREY. Hallo, Mabel. How do you do. I didn't know you were here.

MABEL. Mrs. Cassilis has just gone to tell you.

GEOFFREY. I know. She met us as we were coming back from eating strawberries. We've been perfect pigs. She and Ethel will be here in a moment. I ran on ahead.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*rising*) Well it's close on lunch time. I shall go in and get ready. (*exit R.*)

(*Pause.*)

GEOFFREY. You rode over?

(*Sitting on arm of chair L. c.*)

MABEL. Yes, on Basil. He really is the sweetest thing. I like him much better than Hector.

GEOFFREY. Poor old Hector. (*sits R.*) He's not so young as he was.

MABEL. No. (*a pause*)

GEOFFREY. Mabel, there's something I want to ask you.

MABEL. Is there?

GEOFFREY. Yes. But I don't know how to say it. (*pause*)

MABEL. (*gracely*) Perhaps you'd better not try then?

GEOFFREY. I must. I feel I ought. It's about something Aunt Margaret said yesterday. . . . Mabel did you ever . . . did I ever . . . did I ever do anything to make you think I . . . I was going to ask you to marry me?

MABEL. No, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Sure?

MABEL. Quite sure.

GEOFFREY. I'm glad.

MABEL. Why, Geoff?

GEOFFREY. Because from what Aunt Margaret said I was afraid without intending it I'd . . . I—hadn't been quite honourable. (*rises*)

MABEL. You have always been everything that is honourable, Geoff. And everything that is kind.

GEOFFREY. Thank you, Mabel. You're a brick you know. And we shall always be friends, sha'n't we?

MABEL. Always. (*rises*)

GEOFFREY. And you'll be friends with Ethel too?

MABEL. If she'll let me.

GEOFFREY. Of course she'll let you. She's the dearest girl. She's ready to be friends with everybody. And she'll *love* you I know. You promise? (*holds out hand*)

MABEL. (*takes it*) I promise.

(*Enter MRS. CASSILIS and ETHEL affectionately, arm in arm, L. from garden.*)

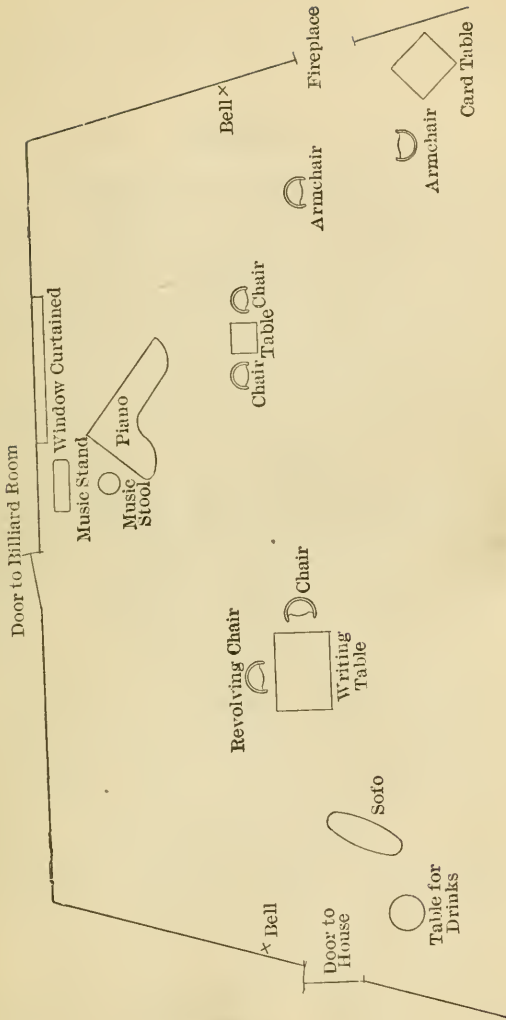
MRS. CASSILIS. Not gone in to get ready yet, Mabel?

MABEL. No. Lady Marchmont only went a minute ago.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*to ETHEL*) You've not met Mabel yet have you? I must introduce you. Miss Borridge—Lady Mabel Venning. (*sweetly*) I want you two to be *great* friends! (*they shake hands, curtain begins to fall*) And now come in and get ready for luncheon. (*they all move towards house, R.*)

CURTAIN.

SCENE PLOT, ACT III.



ACT III.

SCENE.—*The smoking room at Deynham. A week has elapsed. A door R. C. leads to Billiard room. When it is open one can see passage well-lighted. It is closed when curtain rises. Fireplace L. has good fire in it and is large and cosy. Saddle-bag or leather chairs, sofa, etc. A manish, comfortable room. Cigars, cigarettes, etc. Writing table C. Piano up L. C. Window behind it. Door from hall up R. Piano, a small grand so that player can be seen by audience, and singing can be heard to full advantage. Stand with music by its side. A small table below fireplace L. Sofa R. below door, some distance out from wall, set diagonally so that people sitting on it face towards piano. Immediately before piano two armchairs with table between them. Two armchairs, one on either side of fireplace. Card table R. below fireplace between armchair and wall. Paper-knife (breakable) on writing table C., also writing materials, ink, etc. Electric bell by fireplace L. Another by door R. up. The stage is empty when curtain rises. Then enter R. GEOFFREY followed a moment later by MAJOR WARRINGTON.*

GEOFFREY. (*entering R., going to door C. and looking through*) All right, Warrington. They've lighted the lamps.

WARRINGTON. (*enters R.*) Good.

GEOFFREY. (*at door C.*) How many will you give me?

WARRINGTON. (*crossing to fireplace L.*) Oh, hang billiards. I'm not up to a game to-night. That was only an excuse to get away from the women. I believe that's why games were invented. But if you *could* get me a whisky and soda I should be your eternal debtor. Julia kept such an infernally strict watch on me all the evening I never got more than a glass and a half of champagne. A fellow can't get along on *that*, can he?

GEOFFREY. I'll ring. (*goes L. and rings bell above fireplace*)

WARRINGTON. Do. There's a good fellow. (*GEOFFREY rings*) Every man requires a certain amount of liquid per day. I've seen the statistics in the "Lancet." But Julia never reads the "Lancet." Women never do read anything I believe.

GEOFFREY. Have another cigar?

WARRINGTON. Thanks. I don't mind if I do. (*takes one and lights it*) Aren't you going to?

GEOFFREY. (*who looks seedy and distrait*) no, thanks. (*enter FOOTMAN R., with whisky and soda*) Whisky and soda, James.

FOOTMAN. Yes, sir. (*puts it on small table R.*)

WARRINGTON. Off your smoke? (*crosses to sofa R.*)

GEOFFREY. Yes. (*pouring whisky*) Say when.

WARRINGTON. When. (*takes soda*) You not going to have one? (*crosses R. C.*)

GEOFFREY. No.

WARRINGTON. Off your drink?

GEOFFREY. Yes.

WARRINGTON. That's bad. What's the matter? (*sits c.*)

GEOFFREY. Oh nothing. I'm a bit out of sorts I suppose.

(*Pause.*)

WARRINGTON. How well your mother looks to-night, by the way! Jove what a pretty woman she is!

GEOFFREY. Dear mother.

WARRINGTON. (*drinks*) How does she like this marriage of yours?

GEOFFREY. All right.

WARRINGTON. Ah. Bites on the bullet. No offence my dear fellow. I like her pluck.

GEOFFREY. (*exasperated, rises, crosses L.*) I assure you you're mistaken. My mother's been kindness itself over my engagement. She's never said a word against it from the first. I believe she's the only person in this infernal county who hasn't.

WARRINGTON. Except myself.

GEOFFREY. Except yourself. And *you* think me a thundering young fool.

WARRINGTON. Oh no.

GEOFFREY. Oh yes. I could see you looking curiously at me all through dinner—when you weren't eating—as if I were some strange beast. You think I'm a fool right enough.

WARRINGTON. (*on sofa R.*) Not at all. Miss Borridge is a very pretty girl, very bright, very

amusin'. I sat next her at dinner, you know. Not quite the sort one *marries*, perhaps—as a rule——

GEOFFREY. What do you mean?

WARRINGTON. (*shrugs*) Anyhow *you're* going to marry her. So much the better for *her*. What amuses me is your bringing her old reprobate of a mother down here. The cheek of it quite takes away my breath.

GEOFFREY. (*sits c.*) What's the matter with her mother? She's common, of course, and over-eats herself, but lots of people do that. And she's good natured. That's more than some women are.

WARRINGTON. Still she's scarcely the sort one introduces to one's mother, eh? But I'm old-fashioned, no doubt. There's no saying what you young fellows will do. Your code is peculiarly your own. (*another whisky and soda*)

GEOFFREY. (*rises*) Look here, Warrington, what do you mean?

WARRINGTON. (*easily*) Want to hit me in the eye, don't you? *I* know. Very natural feeling. Lots of people have it.

GEOFFREY. (*irritably*) Why shouldn't I introduce her to my mother?

WARRINGTON. Well she's a disreputable old woman, you know. She lived with Borridge for years before he married her. The other daughter's—(*shrugs shoulders*) And then to bring her down here and introduce her to Julia! Gad, I like your humour.

GEOFFREY. Are you sure?

WARRINGTON. Sure? Why it's common knowledge. Everybody knows old Borridge and most people loathe her. (GEOFFREY goes to fire L.) I don't. I rather like her in a way. She's so splendidly vulgar. Flings her aitches about with reckless indifference. And I like her affection for that girl. She's really fond of her. So much the worse for you by the way. You'll never be able to keep them apart.

GEOFFREY. (at fire L.) Why should I want to keep them apart?

WARRINGTON. Why should you—? (drinks) Oh well, my dear chap, if you're satisfied—

GEOFFREY. (low voice) Her sister. . . . ! Poor Ethel! Poor Ethel!

WARRINGTON. (crosses L. with glass) My dear chap don't be so down in the mouth. There's no use fretting. I'd no idea you were so completely in the dark about all this or I wouldn't have told you. Cheer up. (to table L. c. with glass)

GEOFFREY. I'm glad you told me.

WARRINGTON. To think you've been engaged all this time and never found it out. What amazing innocence! Ha! Ha! . . . Ha! Ha! Ha!

GEOFFREY. Don't! (sits down L. on armchair)

WARRINGTON. Sorry, my dear boy. But it's so devilish amusing.

GEOFFREY. (sits below fire) How blind I've been! How utterly blind!

WARRINGTON. (drinks) Well, I rather like a chap who's a bit of an ass myself.

GEOFFREY. Poor mother!

WARRINGTON. Doesn't she know? Not about

old Borridge? (GEOFFREY *shakes his head*) She must! Women always do. They have an instinct about these things which is simply uncanny. It's often highly inconvenient too by the way. She probably says nothing on *your* account.

GEOFFREY. Perhaps so. Or Ethel's. She's been wonderfully kind to Ethel ever since she came down. Perhaps that's the reason. (*rises*) After all it's not Ethel's fault.

WARRINGTON. Of course not. (*rises goes to him*) Well here's luck my dear boy and I won't say may you never repent it, but may you put off repenting it as long as possible. That's the best one can hope of most marriages.

GEOFFREY. Thanks!

WARRINGTON. Well it's been an uncommon amusin' evening. Mrs. Herries' face has been a study for a life-time. And as for Julia's—oh outraged respectability! What a joy it is!

(*Enter the other guests from drawing-room R.*

LADY REMENHAM, LADY MARCHMONT, MRS. HERRIES, MRS. BORRIDGE, ETHEL, MABEL. *Then the RECTOR and MRS. CASSILIS. They enter with a hum of conversation.*)

RECTOR. (*crosses L.*) Well, he's a disreputable poaching fellow. It's no more than he deserved.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses to fire L., sits below on armchair*) Still I'm sorry for his wife.

MRS. HERRIES. I'll send down to her in the morning and see if she wants anything.

MRS. BORRIDGE. So this is where you gentlemen have got to.

GEOFFREY. I brought Major Warrington to smoke a cigar.

LADY REMENHAM. (R. C., *looks fixedly at whisky, then at WARRINGTON*) Algernon!

WARRINGTON. (L.) My dear Julia, I believe there is nothing unusual in a man's requiring *one* whisky and soda at this time in the evening.

LADY REMENHAM. I trust it has been only one. (*sits on sofa R., WARRINGTON finishes glass and puts it down L. on mantelpiece*)

WARRINGTON. Whom have you been sending to jail for poaching now, Rector? No Justice's justice I hope!

RECTOR. Old Murcatt. He's one of Mrs. Cassilis's tenants. A most unsatisfactory fellow. He was caught red-handed laying a snare in the Milverton woods. It was a clear case. (*ETHEL stifles a yawn, WARRINGTON rises goes to stand at piano*)

ETHEL. (*up C.*) I should have thought there was no great harm in that.

RECTOR. My dear young lady!

MRS. CASSILIS. Take care, Ethel dear. An Englishman's hares are sacred.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*crosses L. C.*) How silly! I can't bear 'are myself. (*crosses L. C., sits*)

(*Pause.*)

RECTOR. (*at fire*) You'll have plenty of partridges this year Mrs. Cassilis. We started five coveys as we drove here.

MRS. CASSILIS. We generally have a good many.

(Pause.)

(ETHEL *stifling another yawn strolls to piano, opens it and strikes a note or two idly.*)

MABEL. You play I know, Ethel. Won't you play something?

ETHEL. (*sulkily*) No. (*turns away, crosses down L. to fire*)

(Pause.)

MRS. HERRIES. I saw you out riding to-day, Mabel. I looked in at Dobson's cottage. Poor fellow, I'm afraid he's very ill.

MABEL. (*comes c., sits*) Yes. I was with Geoffrey. We had a long ride, all through Lower Milverton and Carbury to Mirstoke. It was delightful.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*to Mrs. HERRIES*) Your husband has a lot of that sort of thing to do down here, I suppose, Mrs. 'Erris?

MRS. HERRIES. When people are ill they generally like a visit from a clergyman, don't they?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well there's no accounting for tastes. My 'usband, when he was ill wouldn't 'ave a parson near 'im. Said it gave 'im the creeps.

(Pause. WARRINGTON *crosses at back to R.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*crosses to fire, coming to rescue*) How sensible of you to have a fire, Adelaide.

MRS. CASSILIS. It is pleasant, isn't it? These July evenings are often cold in the country.

(ETHEL stifles prodigious yawn)

GEOFFREY. (*rises, crosses at back to piano*)
Tired, Ethel?

ETHEL. (*pettishly*) No. (*turns away*)

(*Pause.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (L.) Won't somebody play billiards? Are the lamps lighted, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY. Yes, mother.

MRS. CASSILIS. Or shall we play Pyramids? Then we can all join in. You'll play, Mrs. Borridge, I'm sure?

MRS. BORRIDGE. I'm on.

MRS. CASSILIS. You, Lady Remenham?
(*crosses R. C.*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*rises, crosses L.*) No, thanks. Mrs. Herries and I are going to stay by the fire and talk about the Rector's last sermon.
(*the Rector raises hands in horror*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses R.*) You, Margaret?

LADY MARCHMONT. No, really. I've never played Pyramids in my life.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*coming C.*) Then it's 'igh time you began, Lady Marchmont. I'll teach you. (RECTOR *at fire*)

(MRS. CASSILIS *looks entreaty*. LADY MARCHMONT *smiles.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*rises, coming C.*) Very well. (*to Mrs. Borridge*) To please you, dear Mrs. Borridge! (*Exit, LADY REMENHAM sits in armchair above fire L.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. You, Mabel? That's three.
(MABEL and LADY MARCHMONT *go off c. together*)
Ethel four.

ETHEL. No thank you, Mrs. Cassilis. I won't play. (*coming L. c.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Why not, Eth. You're a nailer at Pyramids.

ETHEL. (*pettishly, going down R.*) Because I'd rather not, mother. (*turns away*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. All right, dearie. You needn't snap my nose off. (*exit c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Geoffrey Five. The Rector six. (*going up R. c.*)

RECTOR. Very well, if you won't play for money. I've no conscientious objections to playing for money but whenever I do it I always lose. Which comes to the same thing. (*exit c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*up R. c.*) You, Major Warrington, of course?

WARRINGTON. (*down R. cross to L. c. up, laughing*) No thanks. I shall stay here and flirt with Mrs. Herries.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*up L. c.*) Very well. How many did I say? Six wasn't it. And myself seven. Coming Geoff?

GEOFFREY. All right, mother. (MRS. CASSILIS *takes his arm and leads him off c*)

LADY REMENHAM. Now Mrs. Herries draw up that chair to the fire and we'll talk scandal.

WARRINGTON. (*cross to fireplace, L.*) The Rector's sermon Julia! (*takes glass puts it back again*)

LADY REMENHAM. Algernon! (*he stops dead*)

(*The two ladies plunge into conversation before fireplace R. ETHEL is strolling aimlessly about. Presently she goes to writing table C. sits down facing audience and fidgets with paperknife. Yawns heartily.*)

WARRINGTON. (*going to her*) Bored, Miss Borridge?

ETHEL. I wonder. "

WARRINGTON. (*sits at table L. of table C.*) I don't. (*she laughs*) Life isn't very lively down here till the shooting begins.

ETHEL. I don't shoot. So I'm afraid that won't help me much.

WARRINGTON. I remember. Nor ride, I think you told me?

ETHEL. (*yawns*) Nor ride.

WARRINGTON. Gad. I'm sorry for you.

ETHEL. (*looking curiously at him*) I believe you really are.

WARRINGTON. Of course I am.

ETHEL. I don't know about "of course." Except for Mrs. Cassilis—and poor Geoff—who doesn't count—I don't find much sympathy in *this* part of the country. Heigho! How they hate me.

WARRINGTON. No. No.

(*Mrs. HERRIES gets table and cards from down R. puts table before fire between herself and LADY REMENHAM.*)

ETHEL. Oh yes they do. Every one of them. From Watson who pours out my claret at dinner

and would dearly love to poison it to your sister who is glaring at us at this moment.

WARRINGTON. (*looking up and laughing*)
Dear Julia. She never had any manners.

ETHEL. She's no worse than the rest. Mrs. Herries would do just the same if she dared. As for Mabel—

(MRS. HERRIES and LADY REMENHAM *playing their cards.*)

WARRINGTON. Don't hit it off with Mabel?

ETHEL. Oh we don't quarrel if that's what you mean or call one another names across the table. I wish we did. I could beat her at that. We're as civil as the Devil. (*he laughs*) What *are* you laughing at?

WARRINGTON. Only at the picturesqueness of your language.

ETHEL. Is that all? Yes Mabel despises me and I *hate* her.

WARRINGTON. Why?

ETHEL. (*wearily*) Because we're different I suppose. She's everything I'm not. She's well-born and well-bred. Her father's an earl. Mine was a book-maker.

WARRINGTON. Is that all?

ETHEL. (*bitterly*) No. She's running after Geoffrey. (WARRINGTON *shrugs*) She is!

WARRINGTON. (*shrugs*) Jealous?

ETHEL. Yes, I am jealous. Little beast. (*picks up flimsy paper-knife*) I'd like to kill her. (*makes savage jab with knife. It promptly breaks*)

WARRINGTON. (*taking away pieces*) Don't be violent. (*takes pieces and carries them blandly to fire. ETHEL stares straight in front of her*)

(*LADY REMENHAM and MRS. HERRIES have been talking in dumb-show. Their conversation suddenly grows audible.*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*to MRS. HERRIES*) Such a common little thing too! And *I* don't even call her pretty.

MRS. HERRIES. It's curious how Mrs. Cassilis seems to have taken to her.

LADY REMENHAM. Yes. She even tolerates that awful mother. (*WARRINGTON crosses L., irritably*) What is it, Algernon?

WARRINGTON. (*blandly*) Only a little accident with a paper-knife. (*LADY REMENHAM grants. WARRINGTON returns to ETHEL c.*)

MRS. HERRIES. For Geoffrey's sake of course. She's so devoted to him.

LADY REMENHAM. It may be that. *I'm* inclined to think her mind has given way a little. I asked her about it last week. (*half-way through this scene the two ladies notice that the others are no longer speaking and drop their voices to a stage aside. ETHEL glares*)

WARRINGTON. (*returning to ETHEL, sits above her on settee. LADY REMENHAM and MRS. HERRIES resume talk in dumb show*) You were going to tell me what makes you think Mabel is in love with Geoffrey.

ETHEL. Was I?

WARRINGTON. Weren't you?

ETHEL. Well, perhaps I will.

WARRINGTON. Go ahead.

ETHEL. She's staying here and they're always together. They ride almost every morning. I can't ride, you know. And Geoffrey loves it.

WARRINGTON. You should take to it.

ETHEL. I did try one day. They were just starting when I suddenly said I'd like to go with them.

WARRINGTON. (*eyebrows up*) What did they say to that?

ETHEL. Oh Mabel pretended to be as pleased as possible. She lent me an old habit and Geoff said they'd let me have a horse that was as quiet as a lamb. Horrid kicking beast!

WARRINGTON. What horse was it?

ETHEL. It was called Jasmine or some such name.

WARRINGTON. Mrs. Cassilis's mare? Why, my dear girl she hasn't a kick in her.

ETHEL. Hasn't she! . . . Anyhow we started. So long as we walked it was all right and I began to think I might actually get to like it. But soon we began to trot—and that was *awful*. I simply screamed. The beast stopped at once. But I went on screaming till they got me off.

WARRINGTON. What did Geoff say?

ETHEL. Nothing. But he looked terrible. Oh how he despised me!

WARRINGTON. Poor girl.

ETHEL. They brought me back, walking all the way. And Geoff offered to give up riding in the mornings if I liked. (WARRINGTON *whistles*)

But of course I had to say no. So now they go out together every day and often don't come back till lunch.

WARRINGTON. (*goes to R. end of writing table sits*) And what do *you* do?

ETHEL. (*shrugs*) I sit at home and yawn and yawn. (*does so*) Mrs. Cassilis takes me out driving sometimes. She does what she can to amuse me. But of course she's busy in the mornings.

WARRINGTON. What does Mrs. Borridge do?

ETHEL. Oh Lady Marchmont looks after her. I believe she gets a kind of pleasure in leading her on and watching her make a fool of herself. Old cat! And mother sees nothing. She's as pleased with herself as possible. She actually made Lady Marchmont promise to come and stay with us in London!

WARRINGTON. Bravo Mrs. Borridge!

ETHEL. So I sit here or in the drawing room with a book or the newspaper and I'm bored! bored!

WARRINGTON. And Geoffrey?

ETHEL. He doesn't seem to notice. If I say anything to him about it he just says I'm not *well*! He's very kind and tries to find things to amuse me but it's a strain. And so it goes on day after day. Heigho!

WARRINGTON. (*goes to her sits R. C.*) (*pause*) Well my dear I admire your courage.

ETHEL. What do you mean?

WARRINGTON. A lifetime of this! Year in year out. Till you can yawn yourself decently into your grave.

ETHEL. (*alarmed*) But it won't always be like this. We sha'n't *live* here, Geoff and I.

WARRINGTON. Oh yes you will. Mrs. Cassilis was talking only at dinner of the little house she was going to furnish for you both down here, just on the edge of the Park. So that you could always be near her.

ETHEL. But Geoff has his profession.

WARRINGTON. His profession is only a name. He makes nothing at it. And never will. Geoffrey's profession is to be a country gentleman and shoot pheasants.

ETHEL. But we shall have a house in London as well.

WARRINGTON. Not you. As long as his mother lives Geoffrey will be dependent on her you know. He has nothing worth calling an income of his own. And he's proud. He won't accept more from her than he's obliged even if her trustees would allow her to hand over anything substantial to him on his marriage—which they wouldn't.

ETHEL. I shall refuse to live down here.

WARRINGTON. My dear you won't be asked. You'll have to live where Mrs. Cassilis provides a house for you. Besides Geoff will prefer it. He likes the country and he's devoted to his mother.

ETHEL. Phew. (*rises crosses c.*)

WARRINGTON. Happily it won't last forever. I daresay you'll have killed poor Mrs. Cassilis off in a dozen years or so. Though you never know how long people will last nowadays by the way. These modern doctors are the devil.

ETHEL. Kill her off? What do you mean? I don't want to kill Mrs. Cassilis. I like her.

WARRINGTON. (*rises goes to her sits on writing table*) My dear young lady you don't suppose you'll be able to *stand* this sort of thing do you? Oh no. You'll kick over the traces and there'll be no end of a scandal and Geoff'll blow his brains out—if he's got any—and she'll break her heart and that'll be the end of it.

ETHEL. It won't. (*sits L. of writing table*)

WARRINGTON. Oh yes it will. You don't know what County Society is. The dullness of it! How it eats into your bones. *I* do.

ETHEL. Does it bore *you* too?

WARRINGTON. Bore? It bores me to *tears*! I'm not a bad lot really. At least no worse than most middle-aged bachelors. But Julia thinks me an utterly abandoned character and I take care not to undeceive her. Why? Because I find Milverton so intolerable. I used to come down every Christmas. One of those ghastly family reunions. A sort of wake without the corpse. At last I couldn't stand it and did something perfectly outrageous. I forget what. But I know the servants all gave warning. So now I'm supposed to be thoroughly disreputable and that ass Remenham won't have me asked to the house. Thank Heaven for that.

ETHEL. But Geoff likes the country.

WARRINGTON. I daresay. But Geoffrey and I are different. So are Geoffrey and you. You and I are town birds. He's a country bumpkin. *I* know the breed!

ETHEL. And I shall have to stand this all my life! All my life! I won't! I won't!

WARRINGTON. You will!

ETHEL. I won't I tell you! (WARRINGTON shrugs) It's too sickening. (*pause, eagerly, dropping her voice*) I say let's go off to Paris, you and I, and leave all this. It'd be awful fun.

WARRINGTON. (*appalled, looks nervously L.*) Hush! Hush! For God's sake, Julia'll hear.

ETHEL. (*lower voice*) Never mind. What does it matter? Let's go. You'd enjoy it like anything. We'd have no end of a good time.

WARRINGTON. (*desperately*) My dear young lady haven't I just told you I'm not that sort at all. I'm a perfectly respectable person of rather austere morality than otherwise.

ETHEL. Rot! You'll come? (*takes his arm*)

WARRINGTON. No. I won't. (*getting off table*) I decline. I can't go off with the girl my host is going to marry. It wouldn't be decent. Besides, I don't want to go off with anybody.

ETHEL. (*depressed*) You won't?

WARRINGTON. (*testily*) No, I won't. And for goodness sake speak lower. Julia's listening with all her ears.

ETHEL. Poor Major Warrington. How I scared you!

WARRINGTON. I should think you did. I'm not so young as I was. A few years ago a little thing like that never made me turn a hair. Now I can't stand it. (*wipes his brow*)

ETHEL. You've gone through it before, then?

(WARRINGTON *sits.*)

WARRINGTON. More than once, my dear.

ETHEL. (*rises*) And now you'll look down on me too.

WARRINGTON. On the contrary, I admire you immensely. In fact, I don't know which I admire more, your pluck or your truly marvellous self-control. To ask me to go off with you without letting Julia hear! (*looking anxiously towards her*) It was masterly.

ETHEL. (*sighs*) Well, I suppose I shall have to marry Geoff after all.

WARRINGTON. I suppose so. Unless you could go off with the Rector? (*she laughs shrilly*). (*The two ladies turn sharply and glare*).

ETHEL. Now I've shocked your sister again.

WARRINGTON. You have. She thinks I'm flirting with you. That means I sha'n't be asked down to Milverton for another five years. Thank Heaven for that! Ah, here are the billiard players. (*rises*)

(*Goes down R.* *ETHEL sits C.*)

GEOFFREY. (*opening door C., stands to let her pass. To MABEL*) You fluked outrageously, you know.

MABEL. (*entering*) I didn't. (*coming to writing table.*)

GEOFFREY. Oh, yes you did. Didn't she, mother?

MRS. CASSILIS. Disgracefully. (*stops up C.*)

(*During this* MRS. BORRIDGE, LADY MARCHMONT, RECTOR, MRS. CASSILIS, MABEL, *enter, followed by* GEOFFREY.)

(MABEL C., MRS. CASSILIS *goes to* L. C. *to chair down* L.)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*going down* R. C.) You'll soon learn, Lady Marchmont, if you practice a bit.

LADY MARCHMONT. Do you think so? (*following her down* R., *sits on sofa*)

LADY REMENHAM. Well, who won, Rector?

MRS. BORRIDGE. I did! (*crosses* L. C.)

LADY REMENHAM. (*frigidly, rises, comes* L. C. *to* GEOFFREY) Indeed? (*rises and goes towards* C.)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Why didn't you play, Mrs. 'Erris? (*at* L. C.)

MRS. HERRIES. I never play games.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You should learn. I'd teach you.

MRS. HERRIES. Thank you. I fear I have no time. (*rises, goes up* L. C. *and joins* LADY REMENHAM.)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*c. at back*) Ethel dear, we missed you sadly. I hope you haven't been dull?

ETHEL. (*with hysterical laugh*) Not at all. Major Warrington has been entertaining me.

(MRS. CASSILIS *crosses to* RECTOR.)

RECTOR. I suspect Miss Borridge felt there would be no opponent worthy of her steel. (ETHEL *shrugs her shoulders rudely. He turns away.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. I wonder if we could have some music now. Mabel dear, won't you sing to us?

MABEL. I've got nothing with me.

GEOFFREY. Do sing Mabel. There'll be lots of things you know here. (GEOFFREY *opens the piano*) Let me find something. Schumann?

MABEL. (*shakes head*) I think not. (*joins him in searching music stand.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Sing us that Schubert song you sang when we were dining with you last, dear. (*goes to* RECTOR.)

MABEL. (*rises*) Very well. (*goes to* GEOFFREY) Where's Schubert, Geoffrey?

(WARRINGTON *works round to chair c.*)

ETHEL. (*to* WARRINGTON) Do you see that? (*watching* GEOFFREY'S and MABEL'S *heads in close proximity, takes step forward. WARRINGTON holds her back.*)

WARRINGTON. Hush. Be quiet for heaven's sake.

ETHEL. The little *cat*!

MABEL. Here it is. Geoff, don't be silly. (*turns to piano*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Can you see there?

(MABEL *on music stool. GEOFFREY standing above piano* L. C. LADY REMENHAM and LADY MARCHMONT *on sofa* R., MRS. BORRIDGE *on chair* R. C. *below piano. MRS. CASSILIS on chair* L. C. *below piano. MRS. HERRIES in armchair above*

fireplace L. RECTOR in armchair below fireplace. ETHEL in chair C., WARRINGTON in chair R. C. by her.)

MABEL. Yes, thank you. (*she sings two verses of Schubert's "Adieu," in German, very simply in a small but sweet voice. GEOFFREY stands by listening. ETHEL glares at both. When it is over MABEL rises at once and leaves piano.*) (*crosses, goes R. C. at back.*)

(While MABEL sings, the byc play of the listeners is all important, LADY REMENHAM sits on sofa in attitude of seraphic appreciation of a daughter's efforts. MRS. HERRIES gently beats time with her fan. LADY MARCHMONT displays polite attention. MRS. CASSILIS is sweetly appreciative. MRS. BORRIDGE's face is, on the contrary, a study. She begins by settling herself to listen quite contentedly. When she finds the song is in German, she looks puzzled and disgusted. Then she yawns frankly and fidgets. During the symphony, between the verses, she attempts to talk to MRS. CASSILIS, evidently thinking the song over. MRS. CASSILIS makes sign of silence gently. Verse two begins, MRS. BORRIDGE more disgusted. A second yawn. Then she frankly nods, closes her eyes, her head droops forward, then sideways. She sleeps. At close of song she wakes with a start. ETHEL turns defiantly to MABEL to listen to first few bars of song. Then finding she's not a dangerous rival in singing, turns contemptuously

round facing the audience and fidgets. WARRINGTON throws himself back in his chair and contemplates the ceiling resignedly through first verse. During second verse he and ETHEL begin to talk. LADY REMENHAM swings round on them and glares indignantly. They stop suddenly, and WARRINGTON once more contemplates the ceiling. LADY REMENHAM, however, keeps them under her eye till the song ends.)

GEOFFREY. (*clapping*) Bravo! Bravo!

RECTOR. Charming, charming. (*rises, goes up*
L. C.)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*to LADY REMENHAM*)
What a sweet voice she has.

MRS. CASSILIS. Thank you, dear.

RECTOR. (*to MABEL*) Now we must have another.

GEOFFREY. *Do, Mabel.*

MABEL. No. That's quite enough.

(*GEOFFREY and MABEL up R. C.*)

RECTOR. Miss Borridge, *you* sing I'm sure?
(*up C.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Do, dearie. My girl has a wonderful voice, Lady Remling. Quite like a professional. Old Jenkins at the Tiv. used to say she'd make a fortune in the 'alls.

(*RECTOR crosses at back to end of sofa.*)

LADY REMENHAM. Indeed!

ETHEL. I don't think I've any songs anyone here would care for.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Nonsense, dearie. You've lots of songs. Give them "The Children's 'ome."

ETHEL. Well, I'll sing if you like.

GEOFFREY. (*going to her*) Shall I find you something, Ethel?

ETHEL. (*snaps*) No! (*GEOFFREY turns away snubbed, and joins MABEL up R.*)

(*ETHEL goes to piano. WARRINGTON follows after a moment and stands behind piano L. C. ETHEL turns for a moment and looks at GEOFFREY, who is standing by MABEL. Then without prelude of any kind, strikes into the following refined ditty. She sings with perfect mastery of her method, with a big voice, slight cockney accent, and a good deal of humour. As she warms to her work she puts in illustrative action of a boisterous sort, always with considerable art.*)

* When Joey takes me for a walk, me an' my sister Lue,

'E puts 'is arms round both our waists as lots o' men will do.

We don't allow no liberties and so we tells 'im plain,

And Joey says 'e's sorry—but 'e does the same again!

(*spoken*) Well, we're not going to have that, you know. Not likely. We're not that sort. So we just says to 'im:—

* Any popular music hall song may be substituted for this providing it is of a rowdy kind. "Waiting at the Church" was the one sung at the original performance.

(*Chorus.*)

Stop that, Joey, stop it, Joe,
 Stop that ticklin' when I tell yer *toe*!
 You're too free to suit a girl like me,
 Just you stop that ticklin' or I'll slap yer!

When Joe an' me is man an' wife,—I thinks 'e
 loves me true—

I 'opes 'e'll go on ticklin' me an' leave off ticklin'
 Lue.

'E'll 'ave to leave the girls alone and mind what
 'e's about,

Or 'im an' me an' Lucy 'll pretty soon fall out.

(*spoken*) Yes, I'm not going to put up with that
 sort of thing once we're married. Not I. If 'e
 tries it on I shall sing out straight:

(*Chorus.*)

Stop that, Joey, chuck it, Joe,
 Drop that ticklin' when I tell yer *toe*,
 You're too free to suit a girl like me,
 Just you stop that ticklin' or I'll slap yer!

(*spoken*) Now then, all of you: (*looks across
 impudently to LADY REMENHAM*).

(*Bye-play for ETHEL's song. The listeners begin
 by settling themselves comfortably into their
 chairs prepared to think of something else, as
 English people do during after dinner music
 when the performer is of no social importance.
 But after a dozen bars of verse one are over they
 begin to listen. As the song proceeds their
 wrathful amazement grows.* —LADY REMENHAM

turns mutely to the RECTOR for sympathy. Then to MRS. HERRIES. As the song grows broader she fans herself angrily and whispers a moment to LADY MARCHMONT. MRS. CASSILLIS remains calm and sweet without moving a muscle of her face. GEOFFREY and MABEL look uncomfortable. Only WARRINGTON and MRS. BORRIDGE are enjoying the song. WARRINGTON mischievously, MRS. BORRIDGE with frank pride. She beats time to the first chorus and joins in in the second in stentorian tones while WARRINGTON beats time on the piano. GEOFFREY, half-way through verse two, leaves MABEL'S side and stands behind writing table, looking full at audience, his face showing his disapproval of the whole performance.)

(Chorus fortissimo, joined by her delighted mother, winding up by slapping WARRINGTON soundly on the cheek by way of illustration. Then rises, flushed and excited, from piano, congratulated by WARRINGTON, and stands c. by piano.)

WARRINGTON. Splendid, by Jove, capital.

(After the slap and WARRINGTON'S "capital," there is a horrified hush on the part of everyone save MRS. BORRIDGE, who goes on clapping her hands joyfully and crying, "That's right, ETH. Give 'em another." MRS. CASSILIS alone makes no sign, LADY REMENHAM glares disapproval. At last MRS. BORRIDGE becomes conscious of the awful silence surrounding her and becomes silent too. She looks around, puzzled and

frightened, then realizes that no one else is applauding, subsides into her chair, from which she had risen in her excitement, and hurriedly straightens her hair. Pause.)

MRS. CASSILIS.. (*rises*) Won't you come to the fire Ethel? You must be cold out there.

ETHEL. (*up R. C.*) Thank you, Mrs. Cassilis, I'm not cold.

(MRS. CASSILIS *turns to* MRS. HERRIES. GEOFFREY *comes down R. C.*)

WARRINGTON. (*up C.*) Jove, Miss Borridge. I'd no idea you could sing like that.

ETHEL. Nor had Geoffrey. (GEOFFREY *goes up to MABEL again. ETHEL and WARRINGTON chat together up*)

(MRS. CASSILIS *comes C.*)

LADY REMENHAM (*rising*) Well we must be getting home. Geoffrey, will you ask if the carriage is round.

GEOFFREY. Certainly, Lady Remenham. (*rings electric bell up R.*)

MRS. HERRIES. We must be going too. Come Hildebrand. (*rising.*)

LADY REMENHAM. Are you coming with us, Mabel?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses to R. C.*) Oh, no, I can't spare Mabel yet. She has promised to stay a few days more.

LADY REMENHAM. Very well. (*enter BUTLER.*)

GEOFFREY. Lady Remenham's carriage.

BUTLER. It's at the door, Sir.

GEOFFREY. Very well. (*exit* BUTLER)

LADY REMENHAM. Good-bye then, dear. Such a pleasant evening. Good night Mabel. We shall expect you when we see you. (*general leave takings*)

MRS. HERRIES. Good-bye, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Good night, Lady Remling. (*holds out hand*)

LADY REMENHAM. Good night. (*sweeps past her with icy bow. Mrs. BORRIDGE retires crushed to a chair below fire-place L., and consoles herself with illustrated paper*)

LADY REMENHAM. Algernon!

WARRINGTON. Coming, Julia. (*to* ETHEL) See you in London, then.

GEOFFREY. (*stiffly*) You'll take another cigar Warrington—to light you home?

WARRINGHAM. Thanks. Don't mind if I do. (*GEOFFREY hands box*)

LADY REMENHAM. Algernon! We're going to get on our wraps. (*exit Mrs. CASSILIS and LADY REMENHAM, Mr. and Mrs. HERRIES R. GEOFFREY down R.*)

(*MABEL joins LADY MARCHMONT up R.*)

WARRINGTON. All right, Julia. I shall be ready as soon as you are.

GEOFFREY. (*at door R.*) Help yourself, Warrington. (*exit R.*)

WARRINGTON. (*to* ETHEL, *after helping himself to drink*) Well, my dear, I'm afraid you've done it *this* time!

ETHEL. Done what?

WARRINGTON. Shocked them to some purpose! It was magnificent, but it was scarcely tactics, eh?

ETHEL. I suppose not. But I *wanted* to shock them! Here have they been despising me all the evening for nothing, and when that detestable girl with a voice like a white mouse sang her German Jargon, praising her sky-high! I said I'd show them what singing means. And I did!

WARRINGTON. You certainly did! Ha! ha! You should have seen Julia's face when you boxed my ears. If the earth had opened her mouth and swallowed you up like Korah, Dathan and the other fellow, it couldn't have opened wider than Julia's.

ETHEL. Well, she can scowl if she likes. She can't hurt me now.

WARRINGTON. I'm not so sure of that.

ETHEL. She'll have to hurry up. We go to-morrow.

WARRINGTON. Ah, I didn't know. Well, there's nothing like exploding a bomb before you leave, eh? Only it's not always safe—for the operator.

GEOFFREY. (*re-enter* GEOFFREY R. *with* Mrs. CASSILIS) The carriage is round, Warrington. Lady Remenham's waiting.

WARRINGTON. The deuce she is. (*swallows whisky and soda*) I must fly. Good-bye again, Good-bye Mrs. Cassilis. A thousand thanks for a most interesting evening. (*exit with* GEOFFREY, *pause*. *ETHEL stands sullen by fire-place*)

Mrs. BORRIDGE. (*yawning*) Well I think I

shall turn in. (*crosses to R. C.*) Good night, Mrs. Cassilis. (*general handshake*) Coming, Eth?

ETHEL. In a moment, mother. Good night.
(*exit* MRS. BORRIDGE R.)

(MABEL and LADY MARCHMONT *up R., come down R., re-enter* GEOFFREY R.)

LADY MARCHMONT. I must be off, too. And so must you, Mabel. You look tired out. (*kisses* MRS. CASSILIS. GEOFFREY *opens door R.*)

MABEL. I am a little tired. Good night. (*hand shake to* LADY MARCHMONT and GEOFFREY. MRS. CASSILIS *kisses her in passing.* (*Exeunt* LADY MARCHMONT and MABEL.)

GEOFFREY. Are you going, mother?

MRS. CASSILIS. Not at once. I've a couple of notes to write.

(GEOFFREY *crosses to fire.* MRS. CASSILIS *goes to writing table centre, sits facing audience and appears to begin to write notes.* GEOFFREY *goes up to* ETHEL *thoughtfully.* A silence, then.)

GEOFFREY. Ethel.

ETHEL. Yes. (*at fire, doesn't move*)

GEOFFREY. Why did you sing that song to-night?

ETHEL. To please Lady Remenham!

GEOFFREY. But, Ethel! That's not the sort of song Lady Remenham likes at all.

ETHEL. To shock her, then.

GEOFFREY. Ethel!

ETHEL. I think I managed it, too!

GEOFFREY. I don't understand. You're joking, aren't you?

ETHEL. Joking!

GEOFFREY. I mean, you didn't really do it on purpose, to make Lady Remenham angry. I'm sure you didn't.

ETHEL. I tell you I did it on purpose, deliberately, to shock Lady Remenham. I suppose I *ought* to know.

GEOFFREY. But why? What made you do such a thing?

ETHEL. (*savagely*) I did it because I choose. Is that plain enough?

GEOFFREY. Still you must have had a *reason*. (*no answer, pause*) Did that fellow Warrington tell you to sing it?

ETHEL. No.

GEOFFREY. I thought perhaps. . . . Anyhow promise me not to sing such a song again here. (*silence*) You will promise?

ETHEL. Pooh!

GEOFFREY. Ethel, be reasonable. You must know you can't go on doing that sort of thing here. When we are married we shall live down here. You must conform to the ideas of the people round you. They may seem to you narrow and ridiculous, but you can't alter them.

ETHEL. *You* don't think them narrow and ridiculous, I suppose?

GEOFFREY. No. In this case I think they are right. In many cases.

ETHEL. Sorry I can't agree with you.

GEOFFREY. Ethel, dear, don't let us quarrel about a silly thing like this. If you are going to marry me you *must* take my judgment on a matter of this kind.

ETHEL. *Must* I!

GEOFFREY. Yes.

ETHEL. Then I won't. So there. I shall do just exactly as I please. And if you don't like it you can do the other thing. I'm not going to be bullied by you.

GEOFFREY. (*goes to her*) My dear Ethel, I'm sure I am never likely to bully you or to do or say anything that is unkind. But on a point like this I can't give way.

ETHEL. Very well, Geoff. If you think that you'd better break off our engagement, that's all.

GEOFFREY. Ethel! (*with horror*)

ETHEL. Well there's nothing to make faces about, is there!

GEOFFREY. You don't mean that. You don't mean you *want* our engagement to come to an end.

ETHEL. Never mind what *I* want. What do *you* want?

GEOFFREY. Of course I want it to go on. You know that.

ETHEL. (*gesture of despair*) Very well then. You'd better behave accordingly. And now, if you've finished your lecture, I'll go to bed. Good night. (*MRS. CASSILIS comes down c. GEOFFREY sees her off opening door R. Then goes and stands by fire. MRS. CASSILIS, who has watched this scene intently with smile of grim satisfaction,*

risers. *She pauses for a minute in thought. Then.)*

MRS. CASSILIS. Well I must be off too! Good night Geoffrey. *(kisses him)*

GEOFFREY. *(absently)* Good night, mother. *(MRS. CASSILIS after a moment goes slowly towards door. Pause)* Mother.

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Mother, You don't think I was unreasonable in what I said to Ethel, do you?

MRS. CASSILIS. No, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Or unkind?

MRS. CASSILIS. No, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. I was afraid. She took it so strangely.

MRS. CASSILIS. She's rather over-excited to-night, I think. And tired, no doubt. She'll be all right in the morning.

GEOFFREY. You think I did right to speak to her about that song?

MRS. CASSILIS. Quite right, dear. Dear Ethel still has a little to learn, and of course it will take time. But we must be patient. Meantime, whenever she makes any little mistake, such as she made to-night, I think you should certainly speak to her about it. It will be such a help to her! I don't mean *scold* her, of course, but speak to her gently and kindly, just as you did to-night.

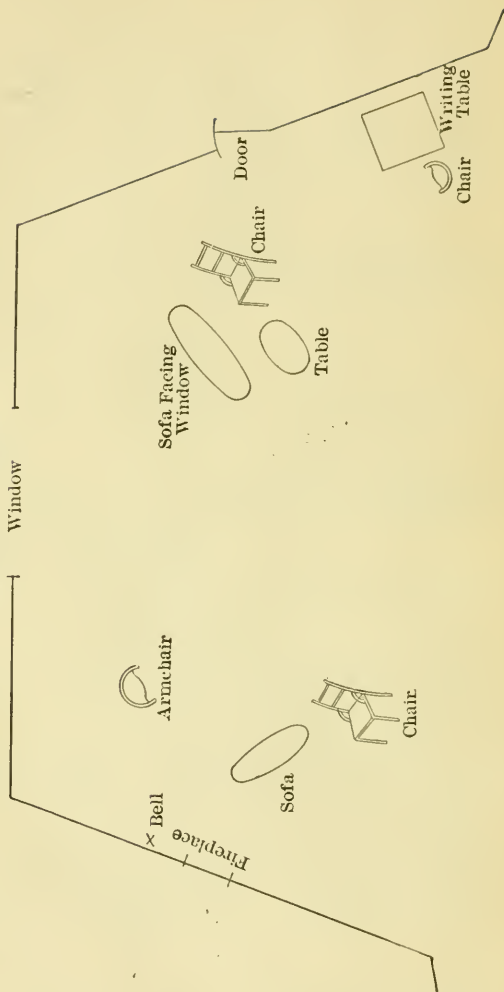
GEOFFREY. *(despondently)* It didn't seem to do any good.

MRS. CASSILIS. One never knows, dear. Good night. *(kisses him. Exit. He stands thoughtful by fire)*

CURTAIN.

SCENE PLOT, ACT IV.

Back Cloth, Garden



ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The morning room at Deynham. After breakfast next day. A pleasant room with French windows c., open on to terrace. The sun is shining brilliantly. Door to hall L. Back cloth represents garden scene. Sofa c. up stage facing audience in front of window, but rather to L. of it. Room to pass behind it. Armchair to R. of sofa. Room to pass between it and end of sofa to go out into garden. Another sofa, smaller, stands out at right angles from wall R. above fireplace. Electric bell by fireplace at end of sofa. Armchairs up R. c. and R. down. Small table L. c. with chair by it. Armchair L. rather below door some way out from wall. When curtain rises MABEL and GEOFFREY are on stage. GEOFFREY stands by fire-place R. MABEL strolls to window c. He looks rather out of sorts and dull.)*

MABEL. (*at window*) What a lovely day.

GEOFFREY. Not bad. (*pulls out cigarette case*)

MABEL. I'm sure you smoke too much, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY. (*smiles*) I think not. (*enter Mrs. CASSILIS L.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Not gone out yet, dears? Why Mabel you've not got your habit on.

MABEL. We're not going to ride this morning.

MRS. CASSILIS. Not going to ride?

MABEL. No. We've decided to stay at home to-day for a change.

MRS. CASSILIS. But why, dear?

MABEL. I don't know. We just thought so. That's all.

MRS. CASSILIS. But you must have some reason. You and Geoffrey haven't been quarrelling, have you?

MABEL. Of course not.

MRS. CASSILIS. Then why aren't you going to ride?

MABEL. Well, we thought Ethel might be dull if we left her all alone.

MRS. CASSILIS. Nonsense dears. I'll look after Ethel. Go up and change both of you at once. Ethel would be dreadfully grieved if you gave up your ride for her. Ethel's not selfish. She would never allow you or Geoffrey to give up a pleasure on her account. (*crosses R.*)

GEOFFREY. Well, Mabel, what do you say? It is a ripping day.

MABEL. If Mrs. Cassilis thinks so.

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course I think so. Run away dears and get your things on. I'll tell them to send around the horses. (*rings*)

GEOFFREY. All right. Just for an hour. Come on, Mabel. I'll race you to the end of the passage. (*exeunt running, nearly upsetting footman who enters L. at the same moment*) *

* Note that the time allowed for Mabel's change of dress is very short. It is therefore important to arrange that the

MRS. CASSILIS. Lady Mabel and Mr. Geoffrey are going out riding. Tell them to send the horses round. And tell Hallard I want to see him about those roses. I'm going into the garden now.

FOOTMAN. Very well, Madam. (*exit L.*)

(MRS. CASSILIS *goes out c.* A moment later enter
MRS. BORRIDGE and *Ethel L.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*looking round, then going to easy-chair*) Mrs. Cassilis isn't here?

ETHEL. I daresay she's with the housekeeper.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Very likely. (*picks up newspaper*) Give me a cushion, there's a good girl. (*ETHEL does so*) Lady Marchmont isn't down yet, I suppose.

ETHEL. No. (*turns away*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*putting down paper*) What's the matter, dearie? You look awfully down.

ETHEL. Nothing. (*goes to window c. and stares out into the sunlight*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. I wish Lady Marchmont came down to breakfast of a morning.

ETHEL. (*shrugs*) Do you?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. It's dull without her. She and I are getting quite chummy.

ETHEL. (*irritably, swinging round*) Chummy! My dear mother, Lady Marchmont's only laughing at you.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Nonsense, Ethel. Laughing at me, indeed! I should like to see her!

change shall be as easily made as possible so as to avoid any danger of a stage "wait."

ETHEL. That's just it, mother. You never *will*.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Pray what do you mean by *that*, Miss?

ETHEL. (*hopeless*) Oh, it doesn't matter. (*goes R. to fire-place, leans arm on mantel-piece.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Now you're sneering at me, and I won't 'ave it—have it. (*silence*) Do you 'ear?

ETHEL. Yes I hear. (*stares down at fender.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Very well then. Don't let me 'ave any more of it. (*grumbling to herself*) Laughing indeed! (*pause*) Where's Geoffrey?

ETHEL. I don't know.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Out riding, I suppose?

ETHEL. Very likely.

MRS. BORRIDGE. 'E only finished breakfast just before us.

ETHEL. *He*, mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Dear, dear, 'ow you do go on! You leave my aitches alone. *They're* all right.

ETHEL. (*sighs*) I wish they were! (*pause*) You've not forgotten we're going away to-day, mother? (*sits on sofa R.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. To-day! 'Oo says so?

ETHEL. We were only invited for a week.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Were we, dearie? I don't remember.

ETHEL. *I* do. There's a train at 12.15, if you'll ask Mrs. Cassilis about the carriage.

MRS. BORRIDGE. But I've not let Jane know. She won't be expecting us.

ETHEL. We can telegraph.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Can't we stay another day or two? I'm sure Mrs. Cassilis won't mind. And I'm very comfortable here.

ETHEL. No, mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Why not?

ETHEL. (*exasperated*) In the first place because we haven't been asked. In the second, because I don't want to.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Don't want to?

ETHEL. (*snappishly*) No. I'm sick and tired of this place.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Are you, dearie? I thought we were gettin' on first rate.

ETHEL. Did you. (*rises, goes L. c.*) Anyhow we're going, thank goodness, and that's enough. Don't forget to speak to Mrs. Cassilis. I'll go upstairs and pack. (*as she is going L. MRS. CASSILIS enters c. and meets her. She stops. MRS. CASSILIS kisses her affectionately*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Going out, Ethel dear? Good-morning. (*greets Mrs. BORRIDGE.*)

ETHEL. Good morning.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*putting her arm in ETHEL'S and leading her across stage*) Isn't it a lovely day. I woke at five. I believe it was the birds singing under my window.

ETHEL. Did you, Mrs. Cassilis? (*enter LADY MARCHMONT L.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. Good morning, Adelaide. (*kisses her*) Late again, I'm afraid. (*shakes hands with ETHEL.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sweetly*) Another of your headaches, dear? I'm so sorry.

LADY MARCHMONT. Good morning, Mrs. Borridge. I hope *you* slept well.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Sound as a bell. But then I was always a one-ner to sleep. My old man, when 'e was alive, used to say 'e never knew anyone sleep like me. And snore! Why 'e declared it kep' 'im awake 'alf the night. But *I* never noticed.

LADY MARCHMONT. (*sweetly*) That must have been a great consolation for Mr. Borridge.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Your 'usband snore?

LADY MARCHMONT. (*laughing*) No.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Thinks it's low per'aps? They used to say snorin' comes from sleepin' with your mouth open, but *I* don't know. What do *you* think?

LADY MARCHMONT. I really don't know, dear Mrs. Borridge. I must think it over. (LADY MARCHMONT *takes chair by* MRS. BORRIDGE. *They converse in dumb show. ETHEL and MRS. CASSILIS come down stage.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. What a pretty blouse you've got on to-day, dear.

ETHEL. Is it, Mrs. Cassilis?

MRS. CASSILIS. Sweetly pretty. It goes so well with your eyes. You've lovely eyes, you know.

ETHEL. Do you think so?

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course. So does Geoff.

ETHEL. (*disengaging herself*) Oh, Geoff—Well I must go upstairs. (*to* MRS. BORRIDGE *in passing*) Don't forget, Mummy. (*exit* ETHEL)

MRS. BORRIDGE. What dearie? Oh yes. Ethel says we must be packin' our traps, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*going down L. startled*) Packing?

(LADY MARCHMONT *goes up c.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. She says we mustn't out-stay our welcome. She's proud is my girlie.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*crosses R.*) But you're not thinking of leaving us? Oh you mustn't do that. Geoff would be so disappointed. And so should I.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I don't *want* to go, I'm sure. Only Ethel said——

MRS. CASSILIS. There must be some mistake. You *mustn't* go yet, must they, Margaret?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Ethel said we were only asked for a week.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits in armchair R. c.*) But that was before I really knew you, wasn't it. It's quite different now.

MRS. BORRIDGE. If you feel that, Mrs. Cassilis.

. . . (LADY MARCHMONT *sitting on sofa c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course I feel it. I count on you for quite a long visit.

MRS. BORRIDGE. There! I told Ethel how it was.

MRS. CASSILIS. Ethel doesn't *want* to go does she?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Oh *no*. She'd be delighted to stop on. Only she thought——

MRS. CASSILIS. Very well then. That's settled. You'll stay with us till Geoff and I go to Scotland. That won't be till the middle of August. You promise?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Thank you Mrs. Cassilis. I

call that real hospitable. (*rising*) And now I'll run upstairs and tell my girl or she'll be packing my black satin before I've time to stop her. She's so 'asty. And I always say nothing spoils things like packing, especially satins. They do crush so. (*crit L. As soon as door closes Mrs. CASSILIS heaves sigh of intense relief, showing how alarmed she had been lest the BORRIGES should really take their departure. Pause*)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*who has watched this scene with considerable appreciation of its humour*) How you fool that old woman!

MRS. CASSILIS. So do *you*, dear. (*rises, goes up c.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. Yes. You'll make me as great a hypocrite as yourself before you've done. When you first began I was shocked at you. But now I feel a dreadful spirit of emulation stealing over me.

MRS. CASSILIS. There's always a satisfaction in doing a thing well isn't there?

LADY MARCHMONT. You must feel it then.

MRS. CASSILIS. Thanks.

LADY MARCHMONT. Do you really want these dreadful people to stay all that time?

MRS. CASSILIS. Certainly. And to come back, if necessary, in October.

LADY MARCHMONT. Good Heavens! Why?

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sits up R. c.*) My dear Margaret as long as that woman and her daughter are here we may get Geoffrey out of their clutches. I thought we should manage it last night. Last night was a terrible disillusionment

for him poor boy. But I was wrong. It was too soon.

LADY MARCHMONT. By the way what did that amusing wretch Major Warrington advise?

MRS. CASSILIS. I didn't consult him. I'd no opportunity. Besides I couldn't have trusted him. He might have gone over to the enemy.

LADY MARCHMONT. Yes. He was evidently attracted to the girl.

MRS. CASSILIS. I suppose so. Major Warrington isn't fastidious where women are concerned.

LADY MARCHMONT. Still he knew of course.

MRS. CASSILIS. Only what Lady Remenham would have told him. However his visit wasn't altogether wasted, I think.

LADY MARCHMONT. That song you mean.

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. He gave poor Ethel a glimpse of the Paradise she is turning her back on forever, London, music-hall songs, racketty bachelors, and that made her reckless. The contrast between Major Warrington and, say, our dear Rector can hardly fail to have gone home to her.

(Enter L. quickly ETHEL, flushed and cross.)

ETHEL. *(bursting out)* Mrs. Cassilis—

MRS. CASSILIS. *(very sweetly, rising and going to her L. C.)* Ethel dear, what is this I hear? You're not going to run away from us?

ETHEL. *(doggedly)* Indeed we must, Mrs. Cassilis. You've had us for a week. We really mustn't stay any longer.

MRS. CASSILIS. But my dear it's *delightful* to have you.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*who has just entered breathlessly at door L.*) There you see, dearie! What did I tell you!

MRS. CASSILIS. (c.) Geoff would be *terribly* distressed if you went away. He'd think I hadn't made you comfortable. He'd scold me dreadfully.

ETHEL. (L. c.) I don't think Geoff will care. (LADY MARCHMONT *rises and watches this scene from window c.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*great solicitude*) My dear you've not had any little difference with Geoff? Any quarrel?

ETHEL. No.

MRS. CASSILIS. I was so afraid.

ETHEL. Still we oughtn't to plant ourselves on you in this way.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Plant ourselves! - Really dearie, how can you say such things! Plant ourselves! (*sitting down L.*)

ETHEL. Oh do be quiet mother. (*stamps her foot. Crosses R.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. Anyhow you can't possibly go to-day. The carriage has gone to Branscombe and the other horse has cast a shoe. And to-morrow there's a dinner party at Milverton. You'll stay for *that*?

ETHEL. You're very kind, Mrs. Cassilis, but

MRS. CASSILIS. That's right my dear. You'll stay. And next week we'll have some young people over to meet you and you shall dance all the evening.

MRS. BORRIDGE. There, Ethel!

(LADY MARCHMONT *crosses to sofa up L. c.*)

ETHEL. (*hopeless*) Very well. If you really wish it.

MRS. CASSILIS. That's right. I'm so glad. I sha'n't be able to part with you for a *long* time yet. (*kisses her tenderly*)

(ETHEL *sits hopelessly on chair and does not respond.*)

LADY MARCHMONT. (*under her breath*) Really Adelaide!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*sweetly*) Into the garden did you say Margaret? (*taking her out c.*) Very well. The sun is tempting isn't it? (*exeunt c.*)

(*Pause. ETHEL shows mute exasperation.*)

ETHEL. Well mother, you've done it!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Done what, dearie?

ETHEL. (*impatently*) Oh you know.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*sits L.*) Do you mean about staying on here? But what could I do? Mrs. Cassilis wouldn't *let* us go. You saw that yourself.

ETHEL. You might have stood out.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I did, dearie. I stood out as long as ever I could. But she wouldn't hear of our goin'.

ETHEL. (*rises, crosses R. c.*) Well mother don't say I didn't warn you, that's all.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Warn me, dearie?

ETHEL. That I was tired of this place. Sick and tired of it. That it was time we were moving.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Is that all. I'll remember.
(*pause*) How far did you get with the packing?

ETHEL. I don't know.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You hadn't packed my black satin?

ETHEL. I don't know. Yes I think so. I'm not sure. Don't *worry*, mother. (*sits on sofa R.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. It'll be simply covered with creases. I know it will. Run up at once, there's a good girl, and shake it out.

ETHEL. Oh bother!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Then I must. How tiresome girls are! Always in the tantrums! (*exit L. grumbling*)

(*ETHEL, left alone, sits scowling furiously at the carpet and biting her nails. There is a considerable pause during which her rage and weariness are silently expressed. Then enter L. very fresh and gay GEOFFREY and MABEL in riding things.*)

GEOFFREY. Hullo Ethel! There you are, are you?

ETHEL. (*sulkily*) You can see me, I suppose.

MABEL. We didn't get our ride after all.

ETHEL. Didn't you? (*turns away*)

MABEL. No. Basil has strained one of his sinews poor darling. He'll have to lie up for a day or two.

(*Sits at table L. c.*)

GEOFFREY. Isn't it hard luck? It would have been such a glorious day for a ride. We were go-

ing round by Long Winton and up to Tenterden's farm and——

ETHEL. (*snaps.*) You needn't trouble to tell me. I don't want to hear. (*pause. goes up c.*)

MABEL. I think I'll go up and change my habit, Geoff. (GEOFFREY *nods, exit* MABEL L.)

GEOFFREY. (*going straight up to* ETHEL *and putting hand on her shoulder*) What is it, Ethel? Is anything the matter?

ETHEL. (*shaking him off fiercely*) Please don't touch me.

GEOFFREY. Something has happened. What is it?

ETHEL. (*saragely*) Nothing's happened. Nothing ever does happen *here*.

GEOFFREY. (*he puts hand on hers. She pulls it pettishly away. He slightly shrugs his shoulders, a long pause. He turns, crosses, goes towards door* L.)

ETHEL. Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Yes. (*stops c.*)

ETHEL. I want to break off our engagement.

GEOFFREY. (*not taking her seriously*) My dear girl!

ETHEL. I think it would be better. Better for both of us.

GEOFFREY. (*still rallying her*) Might one ask why?

ETHEL. For many reasons. (*rises*) Oh don't let us go into all that. Just say you release me and there's an end. (*coming c.*)

GEOFFREY. (*more serious*) My dear Ethel what is the matter? Aren't you well?

ETHEL. (*impatiently*) I'm perfectly well.

GEOFFREY. I don't think you are. You look quite flushed. I wish you'd take more exercise. You'd be ever so much better.

ETHEL. Geoffrey you're simply maddening. Do please understand that I know when I'm well and when I'm ill. There's nothing whatever the matter with me. I believe you think everything in life would go right if only everyone took a cold bath every morning and spend the rest of the day shooting partridges.

GEOFFREY. Well there's a lot in that, isn't there?

ETHEL. Rubbish.

GEOFFREY. (*struck by brilliant idea*) It's not that silly business about the riding again is it?

ETHEL. Oh no! no! *Please* believe that I'm not a child, and that I know what I'm saying. *I want to break off our engagement.* I don't think we're suited to each other.

GEOFFREY. (*piqued*) This is rather sudden, isn't it? (*goes L. a little*) .

ETHEL. How do you know it's sudden?

GEOFFREY. Isn't it?

ETHEL. No. It's not.

GEOFFREY. (*struck by a thought*) Ethel, has my mother?

ETHEL. Your mother has nothing whatever to do with it.

GEOFFREY. She hasn't said anything?

ETHEL. Your mother has been everything that's kind and good. In fact if it hadn't been for her I think I should have broken it off before.

But I didn't want to hurt her. (GEOFFREY *rises and paces the room up and down to L. C., for a moment in thought. Then turns to her again*)

GEOFFREY. Ethel you mustn't come to a decision like this hastily. You must take time to consider.

ETHEL. Thank you. My mind is quite made up. (*sits*)

GEOFFREY. Still you might think it over for a day or two, a week perhaps. It (*hesitates*) . . . it wouldn't be fair of me to take you at your word in this way.

ETHEL. Why not?

GEOFFREY. You might regret it afterwards.

ETHEL. (*with a short laugh*) You're very modest!

GEOFFREY. (*nettled*) Oh I'm not vain enough to imagine you would find anything to regret in *me*. I'm a common-place fellow enough. But there are other things which a girl has to consider in marriage aren't there? Position, money. If you broke off our engagement now mightn't you regret these later on, however little you regret *me*?

ETHEL. (*touched*) Geoff, dear, I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to. You're a good fellow. Far too good for me. And I know you mean it kindly when you ask me to take time and all that. But my mind's quite made up. Don't let's say any more about it.

GEOFFREY. (*slowly and a little sadly*) You don't love me any more then?

ETHEL. No. I don't love you any more. Per-

haps I never did love you really Geoff. I don't know.

GEOFFREY. I loved *you*, Ethel.

ETHEL. I wonder.

GEOFFREY. You know I did.

ETHEL. You thought you did. But that's not always the same thing is it? Many a girl takes a man's fancy for a moment. Yet people say one only loves once, don't they. (*pause*)

GEOFFREY. (*sits R. C. in armchair*) Ethel. I don't know how to say it. You'll laugh at me again. But—you're sure you're not doing this on *my* account?

ETHEL. On *your* account?

GEOFFREY. Yes. To spare me. Because you think I ought to marry in my own class as Lady Remenham would say?

ETHEL. No.

GEOFFREY. Quite sure?

ETHEL. (*nods*) Quite.

(*Going up to window c.*)

GEOFFREY. (*frankly puzzled*) Then I *can't* understand it!

ETHEL. (*impatiently*) My dear Geoff is it impossible for you to understand that I don't *want* to marry you. That if I married you I should be bored to death. That I *loathe* the life down here among your highly respectable friends. That if I had to *live* here with you I should yawn myself into my grave in six months. (*rises*)

GEOFFREY. (*astonished*) Don't you *like* Deynham?

ETHEL. No. I *detest* it. (*goes to him up c.*) Oh it's pretty enough I suppose and the fields are very green and the view from Milverton Hill is much admired. And you live all alone in a great park and you've horses and dogs and a butler and two footmen. But that's not enough for *me*. I want *life*, people, *lots* of people. If I lived down here I should go blue-mouldy in three weeks. I'm town-bred, a true cockney. I want streets and shops and gas lamps. I don't want your carriages and pair. Give me a penny omnibus.

GEOFFREY. Ethel! (*sits on settee*)

ETHEL. Now you're shocked. It is vulgar isn't it. But *I'm* vulgar. And I'm not ashamed of it. Now you know. (*another pause. GEOFFREY in pained surprise ponders deeply. At last he speaks*)

GEOFFREY. It's all over then?

ETHEL. (*goes to sofa R. C., leans against back of it and faces audience. Flippantly.*) All over and done with. I surrender my claim to everything, the half of your worldly goods, of your mother's worldly goods, of your house, your park, your men servants and maid servants, your aristocratic relations. Don't let's forget your aristocratic relations. I surrender them all. There's my hand on it. (*stretches it out*)

GEOFFREY. (*pained*) Don't, Ethel. (*rises, turns to small table L. C.*)

ETHEL. (*surprised*) My dear Geoff, you don't mean to say you're *sorry*. You ought to be flinging your cap in the air at regaining your liberty. Why I believe there are *tears* in your eyes!

Actually tears! Let me look (*turns his face to her*)

GEOFFREY. (*pulling it away and going L. c., she goes to him*) You don't suppose a fellow likes being thrown over like this do you.

ETHEL. Vanity, my dear Geoff! mere vanity.

GEOFFREY. It's *not*!

(*Pause.*)

ETHEL. (*suddenly serious*) Geoff, do you *want* our engagement to go on? Do you *want* to marry me still? (*he turns to her*) Do you *love* me still? (*holds up hand*) No Geoff. Think before you speak. On your honour! (*GEOFFREY is silent*) There you see! Come dear, cheer up. It's best as it is. Give me a kiss. The last one. (*she goes to GEOFFREY and holds up her face to be kissed. He kissed her on the forehead*)

ETHEL. And now I'll run upstairs and tell mother. (*laughs*) Poor mother! Won't she make a shine! (*exit L.*)

(*GEOFFREY left alone fidgets about, picks up paper, puts it down, takes out cigarette case, is about to light cigarette, strikes match. Enter MRS. CASSILIS followed a moment later by LADY MARCHMONT C. He blows it out.*)

MRS. CASSILIS. All alone, Geoffrey? (*at window*)

GEOFFREY. Yes mother. (*crosses R. to fireplace*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (*coming c.*) Where's Ethel? (*enter LADY MARCHMONT C.*)

GEOFFREY. Mother—Ethel's . . . (*sees*

LADY MARCHMONT. *Pause*) Good morning, Aunt Margaret.

LADY MARCHMONT. Good-morning. (L. c. *at sofa*)

MRS. CASSILIS. (c) Well, dear?

GEOFFREY. Mother a terrible thing has happened. Ethel was here a moment ago and she has broken off our engagement.

LADY MARCHMONT. Broken it off!

MRS. CASSILIS. (*feigned distress*) Broken it off dear? Surely not?

GEOFFREY. Yes.

MRS. CASSILIS. Oh, *poor* Geoffrey! (*going to him* R. c.) Did she say why?

GEOFFREY. Only that it had all been a mistake. She was tired of it all and didn't like the country and—that's all I think.

MRS. CASSILIS. My *poor* boy. And I thought her so happy with us. You don't think we've been *to blame*—I've been *to blame*—in the way do you? Perhaps we ought to have amused her more.

GEOFFREY. Not you, mother. You've always been sweet and good to her. Always. She said so.

MRS. CASSILIS. I'm glad of that dear. (*goes up* R. *to window*)

(*Enter* L. MRS. BORRIDGE *furiously angry followed by* ETHEL *vainly trying to detain or silence her.* GEOFFREY *retreats up stage where* MRS. BORRIDGE *does not notice him.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. Where's Geoff? Leave me alone, Ethel. Where's Geoff?

ETHEL. He's not here mother. And Mrs. Cassilis is. Do be quiet.

GEOFFREY. (*coming between them*) I'm here. What is it, Mrs. Borridge?

(LADY MARCHMONT *comes down* L.)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (R. C.) Oh Geoffy what *is* this Ethel's been telling me? You haven't reely broke off your engagement, have you?

(MRS. CASSILIS *at fire* R.)

ETHEL. Nonsense, mother. *I* broke it off as I told you.

MRS. BORRIDGE. But you didn't mean it, dearie. It was all a mistake. Just a little tiff.

(GEOFFREY *joins* MRS. CASSILIS *at fire* R.)

ETHEL. No!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes it is. It'll blow over. You wouldn't be so unkind to poor Geoffy.

ETHEL. Mother don't be a fool. It doesn't take anybody in. Come upstairs and let's get on with our packing.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*stamps foot*) Be quiet, Ethel *when I tell you*. (ETHEL *turns up to table* L. C.) Lady Marchmont won't *you* speak to her. Undutiful girl. I should like to *whip* her!

LADY MARCHMONT. (L) Ah well, dear Mrs. Borridge, perhaps young people know best about these things.

MRS. BORRIDGE. (L. C. *excited and angry*) Know best! know best! How should they know best? They don't know anything. They're as

ignorant as they are uppish. (*growing tearful*) And to think 'ow I've worked for that girl! 'Ow I've slaved for 'er, denied myself for 'er. (*breaking down*) I did so want 'er to be respectable. I 'aven't always been respectable myself and I know the value of it. (*crosses R. c. almost hysterical and hardly realising what she is saying*)

ETHEL. Oh, hush, mother!

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*c. angry again*) I won't 'ush, so there! I'm your mother and I won't be trod on. I find someone to marry you—a better match than ever you'll find for yourself, Miss. And this is 'ow I'm treated! (*begins to cry*)

ETHEL. (*taking her arm*) Mother, mother, do come away.

(*Mrs. Cassilis comes down R. a little.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*breaking down altogether*) And now to 'ave to begin all over again. And young men ain't so green as they used to be. Not by a long way. They're cunning most of them. They take a deal of catchin'. And I'm gettin' an old woman. Oh she might 'ave spared me this.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*soothingly*) Mrs. Borridge, Mrs. Borridge.

(*ETHEL goes to window.*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*paying no attention, snuffing*) But she's no natural affection. That's what it is. She doesn't love 'er mother. She's 'eadstrong and wilful and never paid the least attention to what I told 'er. (*burst of tears*) But I do think she might 'ave left 'im to break it off.

Then there'd 'ave been a Breach of Promise and that's always something. That's what I always say to girls "Leave *them* to break it off, dearies and then there'll be a breach of promise *and* damages." That's if you've got something on paper. But (*fresh burst of tears*) she never *would* get anything on paper. She never paid the least regard to her old mother. She's an undutiful girl and that's 'ow it is. (*goes off into incoherent sobs*)

BUTLER. Lady Remenham.

MRS. CASSILIS. (*hastily rising*) The drawing room, Watson. (*crosses L. C. She is however too late to stop WATSON from showing in LADY REMENHAM*)

LADY REMENHAM. (*sailing in*) How do you do, Adelaide. How do you do, Margaret. I've just driven Algernon to the station and I thought I'd leave this for you as I passed. (*gives book*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. She's an undutiful daughter. That's what she is. (*snorting and sobbing*)

LADY REMENHAM. (L. C.) Eh?

MRS. CASSILIS. Mrs. Borridge is not quite herself just now. Dear Ethel has decided that she does not wish to continue her engagement to my son and Mrs. Borridge has only just heard the news.

LADY REMENHAM. Not wish !

MRS. CASSILIS. No. This has naturally upset us all very much. It was so very sudden.

LADY REMENHAM. Well I must say.
(*takes refuge in silence*)

MRS. BORRIDGE. (*burst of grief*) Oh why

didn't she get something on paper. (*ETHEL comes down to her R. C.*) Letters is best. Men are that slippy. I always told her to get something on paper. (*breaks down completely*)

ETHEL. Come away, mother. (*takes her firmly by the arm*) Will you please order the carriage, Mrs. Cassilis? (*leads MRS. BORRIDGE off L. sobbing and gulping*)

(*GEOFFREY goes to window.*)

LADY REMENHAM. Geoffrey will you please tell the coachman to drive round to the stables? I shall stay to luncheon!

(*LADY REMENHAM sits L. C. facing audience, a smile of triumphant satisfaction irradiating her countenance. GEOFFREY, who is standing by window C. and therefore behind her, luckily cannot see her face but the audience can and it speaks volumes. GEOFFREY goes out C. to tell coachman.*)

CURTAIN.

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321 The Pirate's Legacy	345 Drunkard's Doom	369 Saratoga	393 Fine Feathers
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323 Adelgitha	347 Fifteen Years of a Drunk-	371 Lily of France	395 Iron Master
324 Senor Valiente	348 No Thoroughfare [ard's	372 Led Astray	396 Engaged
325 Forest Rose	349 Peep O' Day Life	373 Henry V	397 Pygmalion & Galatea
326 Duke's Daughter	350 Everybody's Friend	374 Unequal Match	398 Leah
327 Camilla's Husband	351 Gen. Grant	375 May or Dolly's Delusion	399 Scrap of Paper
328 Pure Gold	352 Kathleen Mavourneen	376 Allatons	400 Lost in London
VOL. XLII.	VOL. XLV.	VOL. XLVIII.	VOL. LI.
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330 Fool's Revenge	354 Fruits of the Wine Cup	378 Under the Gas Light	402 Confederate Spy
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VOL. XLIII.	VOL. XLVI.	VOL. XLIX.	VOL. LII.
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338 Dead Heart	362 Locille	386 Daniel Druce	410 Progress
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340 Dumb Boy of Manchester	364 Wicked World	388 Adrienne	412 Midnight Charge
341 Ralphiegor the Mountebank	365 Two Orphans	389 The Bells	413 Confidential Clerk
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- 203 Norah Creina
- 204 Good for Nothing
- 205 The First Night
- 206 The Eton Boy
- 207 Wandering Minstrel
- 208 Wanted, 1000 Milllaers

VOL. XXVII.

- 209 Poor Pilcoddy
- 210 The Mummy [Glasses]
- 211 Don't Forget your Opera
- 212 Love in Livery
- 213 Anthooy and Cleopatra
- 214 Trying It On
- 215 Stage Struck Yankee
- 216 Young Wife and Old Um-brella

VOL. XXVIII.

- 217 Crinoline
- 218 A Family Fallng
- 219 Adopted Child
- 220 Turned Heads
- 221 A Match in the Dark
- 222 Advice to Husbards
- 223 Siamese Twins
- 224 Sent to the Tower

VOL. XXIX.

- 225 Somebody Else
- 226 Ladies' Hattle
- 227 Art of Acting
- 228 The Lady of the Lions
- 229 The Rights of Man
- 230 My Husband's Ghost
- 231 Two Can Play at that Game
- 232 Fighting by Proxy

VOL. XXX.

- 233 Unprotected Female
- 234 Pet of the Petticoats
- 235 Forty and Fifty [book]
- 236 Who Stole the Pocket-
- 237 My Son Diana [alon]
- 238 Unwarrantable In tru-
- 239 Mr. and Mrs. White
- 240 A Quiet Family

- 241 Out to Nurse
- 251 A Lucky Hit
- 252 The Dowager
- 253 Metamora (Burlesque)
- 254 Dreams of Delusion
- 255 The Shaker Lovers
- 256 Ticklish Times

VOL. XXXIII.

- 257 20 Minutes with a Tiger
- 258 Miralda; or, the Justice of Tacon
- 259 A Soldier's Courtship
- 260 Servants by Legacy
- 261 Dying for Love
- 262 Alarming Sacrifice
- 263 Valet de Sham
- 264 Nicholas Nickleby

VOL. XXXIV.

- 265 The Last of the Playalls
- 266 King Rene's Daughter
- 267 The Grotto Nymph
- 268 A Devilish Good Joke
- 269 A Twice Told Tale
- 270 Pas de Fascination
- 271 Revolutionary Soldier
- 272 A Man Without a Head

VOL. XXXV.

- 273 The Olio, Part 1
- 274 The Olio, Part 2
- 275 The Olio, Part 3 [ter]
- 276 The Trumpeter's Daugh-
- 277 Seeing Warren
- 278 Green Mountain Boy
- 279 That Nose
- 280 Tom Noddy's Secret

VOL. XXXVI.

- 281 Shocking Events
- 282 A Regular Fix
- 283 Dick Turpin
- 284 Young Scamp
- 285 Young Actress
- 286 Call at No. 1-7
- 287 One Touch of Nature
- 288 Two B'hoys

VOL. XXXVII.

- 289 All the World's a Stage
- 290 Quash, or Nigger Prac-
- 291 Turn Him Out [tice]
- 292 Pretty Girls of Stillberg
- 293 Angel of the Attic
- 294 Circumstances alter Cases
- 295 Katty O'Sheal
- 296 A Supper in Dixie

VOL. XXXVIII.

- 297 Ice on Parle Francals
- 298 Who Killed Cock Robin
- 299 Declaration of Independ-
- 300 Heads or Tails [once]
- 301 Obstinate Family
- 302 My Aunt
- 303 That Rascal Pat
- 304 Don Paddy de Bazan

VOL. XXXIX.

- 305 Too Much for Good Na-
- 306 Cure for the Fidgets
- 307 Jack's the Lad
- 308 Much Ado About Noth'
- 309 Artful Dodger
- 310 Winning Hazard
- 311 Day's Fishing
- 312 Did you ever send y

VOL. XL.

- 313 An Irishman's Man
- 314 Cousin Fannie
- 315 'Tis the Darkest Inn
- 316 Masquerade [fore I]
- 317 Crowding the Sens
- 318 Good Night's Rest
- 319 Man with the Carp
- 320 Terrible Tinker

(French's Minor Drama Continued on 3d page of Cover.)

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